



MESSAGES OF THE PRESIDENT

JOSEPH EJERCITO-ESTRADA

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Historical Papers and Documents

ADDRESSES AND SPEECHES

Inaugural Address of President Estrada, June 30, 1998

TALUMPATI SA PAGTANGGAP NG TUNGKULIN

NG

KAGALANG-GALANG JOSEPH EJERCITO ESTRADA

PANGULO NG PILIPINAS

[Inihayag sa Quirino Grandstand, Manila noong ika-30 ng June 1998]

Mga minamahal kong mga kababayan at Masang Pilipino:

Sa atin pong pagtitipon ngayong hapon, dapat nating pasalamatan ng lubos ang dalawang dating pangulo na sina Ginang Cory Aquino at Ginoong Fidel V. Ramos. Si dating pangulong Cory Aquino ang siyang naging simbolo ng pagbabalik ng demokrasya sa ating bansa. At bagama't marami na ang nagtangka laban sa kaniyang liderato ay naipamana niya sa ating lahat ang isang matatag na demokrasya. Dito rin sa Luneta anim na taon na ang nakararaan ay nagkaroon ng mapayapang pagsasalin ng kapangyarihan ni dating pangulong Fidel V. Ramos na muling pinatatag ang ating pamahalaan at binuhay ang ating pambansang ekonomiya, walang pagod niyang pinagtibay ang kapayapaan na siya naman ang naging balangkas ng mga reporma sa ating ekonomiya.

Sa araw pong ito ipinamalas natin sa buong mundo ang katatagan ng kauna-unahang demokrasya sa Silangang Asya. Salamat sa nagdaang maayos at malinis na halalan. Hinihiling ko po kayong lahat na magsitayo at bigyan natin ng masigabong palakpakan ang atin pong dating pangulong Ramos at dating pangulong Cory Aquino. Maraming salamat po.

Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.

Papalubog na po ang araw at malapit ng kumagat ang dilim. Gayunpaman, ngayong gabi't-hapon ay nagsisimula na ang isang bagong araw, ang araw ng lahing Pilipino, ang araw ng masang Pilipino.

Sa wakas, namumuno na sa ating masa ang isang gaya nila, isang kaibigan at kapatid – na alam kung ano ang ibig sabihin na maging maka-masa.

Noong huling tumindig ako dito sa Quirino Grandstand, kasama ko sina dating pangulong Cory Aquino at Cardinal Sin, at napakaraming nanindigan para sa demokrasya. Kapiling ko rin kayo, at tayong lahat ay napabilang sa mga tunay na kaibigan ng demokrasya. Kaya papaano masasabi na ako raw ay diktador?

Noong huli akong tumindig doon sa lumang gusali ng Senado, labindalawa kami.

Nguni't –

Labindalawa na lumalaban sa isang superpower;

Labindalawa na lumaban sa pamahalaang patuloy na hawak sa leeg ng banyagang kapangyarihan;

Labindalawa na lumaban sa umiiral na public opinion noon;

Subali't labindalawa na nanindigan para sa kalayaan at dangal ng ating bansa.

Sa kabila noon mayroon pa ring nangahas na pagdudahan ang ating prinsipyo!

Nais kong tapusin sa lalong madaling panahon ang ilang isyu na matagal nang gumagambala sa ating bayan.

Bakit po? Upang sana'y iwan na natin ang lahat ng bagay na dapat nating ilibing sa limot ng kasaysayan.

Sa akin pong pagmamadali, marahil hindi ko naisip na kailangan pang lumipas ang mahahabang panahon upang maghilom ang sugat ng ilan, at sugat ng bayan.

Ang tanong ko ngayon: mayroon pa bang sinaktan at nilait nang higit pa sa akin? Mayroon pa bang labis na binastos at ininsulto sa peryodiko o sa radyo, sa telebisyon ng higit pa sa akin. Huwag na lang ako: kahit na ang aking mahal na ina ay lubhang nasaktan dahil sa mga insultong ipinukol sa kanyang anak.

Ako ay tao lamang, at hindi po madaling masabing – forgive and forget, kalimutan na lang. Nguni't kailangan kong tapusin ang yugtong ito, at sa akin ay tapos na, nasa likod na natin, at hindi na dapat pag-usapan pa.

‘Pagkat dapat lamang na ako ay makisama sa lahat na ating mamamayan, kasama man o katunggali, kaibigan o kalaban.

Bakit? Sapagka't iisa lamang ang ating bayan, iisa lamang ang ating landas, at kung hindi tayo magsasama-sama sa isang tunay na bukluran, kanino pa kaya, at kailan pa, kundi ngayon?

Ngayon na — sapagkat ang hinaharap ng ating bansang Pilipino ay lubhang mabigat, lubhang malalim. Ang regional currency crisis ay paghamon hindi lamang sa ating mag bangko o mga negosyante, kundi sa bawa't pangkaraniwang mamamayan.

Kaya sasabihin ko sa inyo ngayon, at sa buong mundo: Hindi tayo nag-alinlangan, at hindi tayo nakakalimot.

If I have seemed impatient, it was because you and I wanted peace and only peace. We must put yesterday behind us, so that we can work for a better tomorrow.

I do not say: let us forget the past. No, I don't. But I ask you that we should not let the past get in the way of a future that requires cooperation to achieve peace and prosperity for the least of us.

Matagal nang naghihintay ang lahat para sa isang bagong umaga. Heto na, ngayon na, ang panahon ng masang Pilipino.

Panahon na upang mapabilis ang pag-angat sa kabuhatan ng masang Pilipino.

Panahon na upang magkaroon ng lalong malaking bahagi, sa yaman ng ating bansa, ang masang Pilipino.

Panahon na upang sabihin: isang daang taon pagkatapos ng Kawit, Cavite, limampung taon pagkatapos na kilalanin ang ating kasarinlan sa panahon ni Presidente Roxas, pitong taon pagkatapos tayong tumalikod sa foreign bases, eto na, narito na, araw na natin ngayon.

Alam nating hindi ito madaling gawin. Malubha ang lagay ng ekonomiya. Dapat lamang pagtuunan ng masusing pansin ang pagsasa-ayos sa pambansang kabuhatan.

May mga nagsasabi: hindi raw maaring madaliin ang mga gawaing ito. Unahin daw muna ang ekonomiya at isunod lamang ang pangangailangan ng mahirap. Wala akong reklamo diyan, pero ang aking tanong: mayroon pa bang ibang paraan upang mai-angat ang kabuhatan ng mga mamamayan? Hindi ba puwedeng sabay-sabay? Bakit ang masa ang laging huli at laging nalalamangan, kapag ang pinag-uusapan ay ang kaunlaran ng ekonomiya?

Noong tinatalakay ang mga reporma na ikabubuti ng mga negosyante, halos wala tayong narinig na nagreklamo sa kanila, na masyadong mabilis at malupit ang pagbabago. Gayunpaman, hindi ba pawang katotohanan lamang na ang pangkaraniwang mamamayan ang pumasan sa malupit na epekto ng liberalization at globalization?

Gustuhin natin o dili, ang hamon ng kompetisyon ay kailangan nating tugunan. Ituring natin itong pagkakataon, nguni't kailangang palakasin ang pambansang ekonomiya at palawakin ang pakinabang ng nakakarami.

Sa anim na taon ng pamamahala ni Pangulong Cory Aquino, naitatag ang pundasyon upang lumakas muli ang ating ekonomiya. Sa pangangasiwa ni pangulong Ramos, nagsimulang magluwal ng debidendo ang ekonomiya para sa malalaking negosyante.

Ngayon naman, dapat lang na ang maliliit ang siyang makinabang sa ating pagsisikap. Sana, sila rin. Sana, sila naman ay maka-bahagi.

Progress must not be measured by the number of golf courses of the rich.

Huwag naman sana nilang masamain ng ilan sa ating mga mamamayan ang mensaheng ito. Mula't sapul, sila ang nakikinabang — at hanggang sa ngayon ay nakikinabang pa rin, sapagkat gagawin natin ang lahat upang maibalik ang katahimikan sa ating bayan, ang katahimikan na kailangan upang umunlad ang ating kalakalan.

Kaya sa ating maliliit at mahihirap, narito ang pangako ni Erap: kayo ang unang makikibahagi sa biyaya mula sa ekonomiya, at mula sa pamahalaan.

Sa abot ng aking makakaya, bibigyan natin ang masa ng disenteng tahanan, sapat na pagkain, at pag-asa sa hinaharap. Pag-aaralin natin ang kanilang mga anak, at aalagaan natin ang kanilang kalusugan. Sa kanilang mga pamilya, ihahandog natin ang katahimikan, hanapbuhay at dangal sa araw-araw.

Sa kasawiang palad, dumating ang panahon ng masang Pilipino habang ang ekonomiya ng buong Asya ay bumagsak. Wala tayong magagawa. Kailangan nating maghigpit ng sinturon, at ipaglaban muna ang sapat at maagang gantimpala sa ating pagsisikap.

Sa aking mga kababayan, ito ang aking masasabi: sa inyong pagsasakripisyo, ako ang mau-una, at ako ang inyong kasama. At sa paglasap sa mga gantimpala ng ating pagsisikap, hindi kayo mahuhuli.

While I ask you to share these sacrifices with me, I will not impose any more on you when it comes to meeting my duties and responsibilities as your President. It is my job now, and I will do it.

Walang dahilan upang lumaganap ang krimen sa ating lipunan; mangyayari lang ito kung ang gobyerno mismo ay kumukupkop sa mga kriminal.

Walang organisasyon o gawaing kriminal na kayang lumaban sa pamahalaan, kung ang pamahalaan ay tapat sa pagnanasang durugin ang mga kriminalidad.

We know that the major crimes in this country are committed by hoodlums in uniforms. We know they are protected by hoodlums in robes. We know that the most damaging crimes against society are not those of petty thieves in rags, but those of economic saboteurs in business suits: the dishonest stockbrockers, the wheeling- dealing businessman, influence-peddlers, price-padders and other crooks in government.

Ipinangangako ko ngayon: gagamitin natin ang buong kapangyarihan ng pamahalaan upang labanan ang krimen — maliit man o malaki. Walang makakalusot. Itatangi. I will use all the powers of government to stamp out crime, big and small.

There will be no excuses, and there will be no exceptions. I have sent friends to jail before, I can send them again.

No government is so powerless that it cannot protect its citizens, especially when they are victimized by government agents.

No government is so helpless that it cannot prosecute criminals, especially when the officials are criminals operating in the open.

Hindi makatarungan na sa isang bansang karamihan ay nagugutom at walang hanapbuhay, ang kaban ng bayan ay winawaldas at ninanakaw. At ang likas na yaman ay pinaghahati-hatian ng malalakas sa gobyerno.

So let me tell you today. There are things that a government, even in the worst economic conditions, can do.

This government will do those things.

Kaya nating sugpuin ang lumalaganap na krimen. Ginawa ko at magagawa ko noong ako ay namuno ng Presidential Anti – Crime Commission. Gagawin ko ngayon ang lahat, ngayon na Pangulo na ako. At walang sinumang makakapigil sa akin.

What I did in PACC, I will now do, and more, as President of the Philippines. And when I succeed this time, nobody, nobody, nobody can clip my powers.

Kaya pa rin ng pamahalaan ang magbigay ng mahahalagang serbisyo: mga lansangan, mga paaralan, mga health centers, sapat na bilang ng mga pulis at sandatahang lakas na sadyang katahimikan ang likha at alaga.

Magagawa ng gobyerno ang lahat ng ito, huwag lamang haluan ng nakawan at pork barrel.

Hindi mapapakain ng pamunuan ang lahat ng mga nagugutom sa ating bansa sa kasalukuyan. Pero uusigin natin ang sinumang kukupit sa pondo na nakalaan sa pagbili ng pagkain.

Hindi kaya ng gobyerno na pagbigyan ang lahat ng mga lugar na nangangailangan ng kalsadang konkreto at asfaltado. Pero hindi natin palalampasin ang sinumang magnanakaw ng perang nakalaan sa paglikha ng mga tulay at kalsada.

Hindi kaya agad ng pamahalaan na pabalikin ang milyun-milyong Overseas Contract Workers, at bigyan sila ng hanapbuhay sa ating bayan. Dama natin ang kalungkutan at sakit ng paghihiwalay sa kanilang mahal sa buhay. Subalit makakaasa sila na hindi natin pababayaan ang kanilang mga pamilya at mga anak. At lalong hindi natin kaliligtaan ang mga kapakanan nila sa ibang bansa.

Hindi kayang bigyan ng sapat na edukasyon ang lahat ng mga kabataang Pilipino sa ngayon, tulad nang itinadhana sa Saligang Batas. Pero hindi natin palalampasin ang sinumang nagwawaldas sa pondong nakalaan sa mga libro at paaralan.

I appeal to the coming Congress to search its conscience for a way to stand behind me, rather than against me, on the pork barrel issue. I appeal to every legislator: let us find a way to convert pork into tuition subsidies in both public and private schools. Let us use it to the better lives of our people, rather than to improve our chances of re – election.

There are crimes that I will make my personal apostolate to punish:

-low crimes in the streets, by rich and poor alike;

-high crimes in Ayala Avenue and Binondo;

-graft and corruption throughout the government, whether in the executive, the legislative, or the judiciary.

Ngayon pa lamang, ang mga kamag-anak ko ay nilalapitan na ng kung sinu-sino. Kung anu-anong deal at kickback ang ipinapangako.

Binabalaan ko sila. Walang kaibigan, walang kumpare, walang kamag-anak o anak na maaaring magsamantala sa ngayon. At ngayon pa lamang sinasabi ko sa inyo, nag-aaksaya lamang kayo ng panahon. Huwag ninyo akong subukan.

Marahil hindi naman napakabigat ang mga pangako ko sa inyo. Simple lamang ang aking minimithi at simple rin ang hinahangad ng masang Pilipino. Subali't pagkatagal-tagal nang hindi natutupad.

Nais kong maihatid ang kapayapaan sa ating buhay, at katiwasayan sa ating lipunan. Nais kong isa-ayos ang gulo sa ating mga lansangan, at itatag ang katarungan sa ating mga institusyon. Nais kong bigyan ng bagong lakas ang ating ekonomiya, at patas na pagsasabahagi ng mga bunga nito.

Nais kong isipin ng bawa't Pilipino, mahirap man o mayaman, na ang pinakaligtas na lugar sa buong mundo, ay ang kanyang lupang tinubuan.

I want every Filipino, rich or poor alike, to feel that the safest place in the world for him is his own country.

At sa dakong huli, umaasa akong magkakaisa tayong lahat upang matamo natin ang kapangyarihan na nagbuhat sa ating makatwirang hangarin. Sa ganitong pagkakaisa, maiiwasan natin ang krisis sa ating rehiyon, at makakamit natin ang pangarap sa ating sentenyal.

Kalayaan.

Kalayaan sa isang mapang-aping kahirapan.

Isang bayang ligtas sa takot, at ang lahat ay pantay-pantay sa pagkakataon.

Nasa diwa at puso ng bawa't Pilipino ang kalayaan. Sa bansang ito, isang daang taon na nag nakakaraan, nasulyapan sa Asya ang unang liwanag ng kalayaan.

Samahan ninyo si Erap, upang bigyan natin ng kakaibang ningning ang kalayaang buhat sa masang Pilipino.

Nitong huling labindalawang taon, malimit tayong manawagan sa kapangyarihan sa sambayanan, sa People Power, alang-alang sa demokrasya, at sa kaunlaran, at sa iba't-ibang bagay.

Sa tulong ng Poong Maykapal, at sa pamamagitan ng ating pagkakaisa, gamitin natin ang kapangyarihan ng sambayanan upang tiyakin ang tagumpay ng masang Pilipino.

Tandaan po natin, mga minamahal kong kababayan, wala pong tutulong sa Pilipino kung hindi ang kapwa Pilipino.

Maraming, maraming salamat po.

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Inaugural Address of President Estrada (English Translation), June 30, 1998

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF

HIS EXCELLENCY JOSEPH EJERCITO ESTRADA

[Delivered at the Quirino Grandstand, Manila on June 30, 1998]

Good afternoon.

The light is fading, the day is almost over, and yet this late afternoon is the morning of a new day. The day of the Filipino masses. One of their own is finally leading them.

The last time I was here at the Quirino grandstand, I was with President Cory Aquino, Cardinal Sin, and other religious leaders and fighters for democracy. We were here with many of you to stand up and be counted as friends of the democracy. Ask yourselves then, how could anyone call me a dictatorial type?

The last time I was there, in the old senate building, we were only Twelve —

Twelve against a superpower;

Twelve against a government under its thumb:

Twelve against public opinion:

But twelve for the sovereignty and honor of our country.

Ask yourselves who has principles.

Maybe I felt strongly about getting all the wrong priorities out of the way so we can focus on the right things at once.

Maybe I felt that we cannot wait for time to heal our wounds and that we should help along the healing process.

Who has been hurt and insulted than I? I have been hurt, and my mother even more deeply at having to listen to all those insults against her son in tri-media. I am but human and I don't want to forgive. But I must. And I have. I must work with those who hurt me because we have only one country between us. I must work with them and they must live with me, because every Filipino is needed to meet the challenge of national survival in the regional crisis.

If I seemed impatient, it was only for peace. We must put yesterday behind us, so we can work for a brighter tomorrow. I did not mean for us to forget the past. I don't. But I hope we will not let the past get in the way of a future that calls for cooperation to achieve peace and prosperity.

Finally, I felt that the common people have waited long enough for their turn, for their day to come.

That day is here.

And it comes not a moment too soon on the centennial of the birth of Filipino freedom.

One hundred years after Kawit, fifty years after independence, twelve years after EDSA, and seven years after the rejection of foreign bases, it is now the turn of the masses to experience liberation.

We stand in the shadow of those who fought to make us free—free from foreign domination, free from domestic tyranny, free from superpower dictation, free from economic backwardness. We acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, Emilio Aguinaldo, Manuel Quezon, Ramon Magsaysay, Cory Aquino, Fidel Ramos, and the magnificent twelve of the 1991 senate who voted for Filipino sovereignty and honor.

These are the men and women who gave birth to the idea of Filipino freedom; who struggled in war to give it recognition; and worked in peace to make it come true. Cory Aquino brought freedom back after it was taken away and Fidel Ramos showed how power should respect the people's freedom of choice in elections.

They also began the slow and difficult work of making freedom more meaningful — not just for the rich but also for the poor who are more but have nothing.

It is time. Time to speed up the improvement of the living conditions of the common people. Time for them to have a fairer share of the national wealth they create and a bigger stake in their own country.

Some will say we cannot rush these things. First, focus on the economy again. Of course, we must improve the economy. How else can the people's lives improve? But why not both together? Why must economic progress always be at the people's expense?

When it was a question of economic reforms to rebuild business confidence and restore business profits, the reforms were never too fast or too hard, especially for the common people to bear.

Six years after Cory Aquino, the foundations of a strong economy were laid. In the six years of the Ramos administration, the economy was paying big dividends to its biggest stockholders. This time, why not to the common people as well, for a change? Must we always measure progress only by the golf courses of the rich?

I hope this message will not be taken badly by the rich. It has always been their turn, and it is also their turn again. For it is the priority of my administration to create the environment of peace and order in which business does well. But, surely, it is time for the masses to enjoy first priority in the programs of the government.

As far as resources permit, to the best of our ability and the limit of our energy, we will put a roof over their heads, food on their tables and clothes on their backs. We will educate their children and foster their health. We will bring peace and security, jobs and dignity to their lives. We will put more infrastructure at their service, to multiply their productivity and raise their incomes.

But this time things will be different. What wealth will be generated will be more equitably shared. What sacrifices are demanded will be more evenly carried. This much I promise, for every stone of sacrifice you carry, I will carry twice the weight.

This I promise the people. You will not be alone again in making sacrifices, and you will not be the last again to enjoy the rewards when they come.

I ask the rich to take a share of the sacrifices commensurate with their strength. What each of us carries is not our individual burden alone, but the fate of our country that we must all share, and which none of us can escape.

While I ask you to share these sacrifices with me, I will not impose any more on you when it comes to my job as president. The job is mine now and I'll do it.

There is no excuse for the spread of crime in any society, unless government is an accomplice. There is no criminal organization or criminal activity that can stand up to the government if the government is sincere about stamping it out.

We know that the major crimes in this country are committed by hoodlums in uniform. We know they are protected by hoodlums in *inbarong* and acquitted by hoodlums in robes. We know that the most damaging crimes against society are not those of petty thieves in rags, but those of economic saboteurs in expensive clothes: the dishonest stockholders, the wheeling dealing businessmen, influence-peddlers, price-padders and other crooks in government.

I promise to use all the powers of government to stamp out crime, big and small.

There will be no excuses and no exceptions. I sent friends to jail before; it was not my fault that the courts let them go.

No government is so powerless that it cannot protect its citizens, especially when they are victimized by government agents.

No government is so helpless, it cannot prosecute criminals, especially when the criminals are officials operating in the open.

And the government of a country, where most of the people are hungry, need jobs and lack education, cannot allow its taxes to be stolen or wasted, its assets thrown to friends, the national patrimony conceded to foreigners, and the best opportunities limited only to those who can afford.

There are things that a real government, even in the worst economic conditions, can do. This government will do it.

Government can stamp out crime, as I tried to do as chairman of the PACC, and as I will do as president of the Republic. This time nobody will clip my powers.

Government can provide basic services without the extra cost of pork barrel or kickback; roads for work; infrastructure for productivity; schools for skills; clinics for health; police for safety, and a lean and mean military machine for national defense. This I promise and I will deliver. I will give you at once a government that works, while we wait for the dividends of yet another round of sacrifice that must fall on your shoulders again.

Government cannot afford to feed all the hungry in our country, but it would be a crime if any money for food went to government officials and fixers instead.

Government cannot afford to build all the roads that are needed, but it would be a crime to build fewer roads to line more pockets.

Government cannot afford to bring back the millions of overseas Filipino workers to jobs and dignity back home, but we shall protect their interests abroad and their families back home.

Government cannot afford to give all the youth the complete education promised by the Constitution, but it would be a crime if any money for education was misspent on inferior textbooks and substandard classrooms built by pork barrel.

I appeal to the coming congress to search its conscience for a way to stand behind me, rather than against me, on the pork barrel issue and find a way to convert pork into tuition subsidies in the public and private schools.

These are crimes that I will make it my personal apostolate to punish:

—low crimes in the streets by rich or poor alike;

—high crimes on Ayala or Binondo;

—and graft and corruption throughout the government—executive, legislative and judicial.

This early, members of my family are swamped with offers of funny deals. I will treat all such offers as evidence for future criminal prosecutions for graft and corruption.

I warn these people. Going after criminals will just be a job for me, but if you drag in my family, it will be personal.

What I promise is not big. What I envision is ordinary. My promises are made to be fulfilled in a working day; they are hopes of ordinary Filipinos like myself, in circumstances less than ideal with the economic recession, but they are long overdue.

I want to bring peace to our lives and harmony to our society. I want to bring order to our streets and justice to our institutions. I want to impart energy to our economy and more equitableness in the distribution of its fruits.

I want every Filipino, rich or poor, to feel that the safest place in the world for him is his own country.

And, lastly, I hope to bring all Filipinos together so as to achieve that power of common purpose that will enable us to escape the crisis of our region and achieve our centennial dream.

Freedom.

Freedom from oppression. Yes; but freedom from want also.

Freedom from fear and freedom of opportunity.

And, of course, freedom for its own sake which is the heart and soul of the Filipino.

It was here, one hundred years ago, that Asia sitting in darkness saw the first light of freedom.

Share my resolve to make that light shine brighter yet by making our freedom more real for the majority of the people.

For the past twelve years, the call has been for people power to defend democracy, advanced economic development and other things. It is time to use that power for the people themselves.

Now, power is with the people; one of their own has made it.

**Speech of President Estrada during the World Economic Forum's East Asia Economic Summit, October 13,
1998 Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the World Economic Forum's East Asia Economic Summit**

[Delivered at the Ballroom 2, Singapore International Convention & Exhibit Center, Singapore, October 13, 1998]

Thank you very much Professor Klaus Schwab, chairman, World Economic Forum, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

At the outset, let me thank the World Economic Forum for this important opportunity for economic and business leaders in the region to discuss the urgent issues facing us all. I also wish to thank our gracious hosts, the government and the people of Singapore, for providing us a most agreeable atmosphere for our discussion(s).

It is fitting that we meet in Singapore, an eminent symbol of a state that works, and a region that toils diligently to escape the clutches of poverty and hopelessness.

A quarter-century ago, our countries were poor. The region was a post-colonial backwater. It had little in the way of modern industry.

And danger stalked in the region in the 1960s and 1970s. East Asia suffered wars, civil strife, and internal instability.

Despite these handicaps, East Asia rose like a phoenix through reconstruction, industrialization, and integration with the larger global economy.

Through manufacturing and trade, East Asian economies strove hard to catch up with the industrialized world. Growth rates the region became among the highest and steadiest ever recorded.

From being the proverbial hewers of wood and drawers of water, we in the East Asia emerged as producers of goods and providers of services that matched the world's best.

And while six out of ten East Asians lived in absolute poverty in 1975, roughly two in ten did in 1995.

In short, as we examine where we are today, and our current dilemmas, let us not forget how far we have traveled. What East Asia achieved in the past few decades had been spectacular. As our host, Prime Minister Goh, has reminded us: we did have a miracle in East Asia; it was no mirage.

Then, virtually overnight, the glow of East Asia's miracle dimmed.

All of us today know that our societies and economies have been shaken in (by) the economic crisis.

As the region's currencies plummeted, weaknesses in its financial systems cracked. As corporate debt skyrocketed out of control and credit dried up, production sagged and growth slowed.

The middle class is besieged. Families are being swallowed up again into the ranks of the poor. For the first time in two decades, the war against poverty is in danger of being lost in many parts of the region.

Economic chaos is straining social and political systems. The domestic consensus that had supported more open economies and societies in a growing number of countries is threatening to unravel.

We who have been tasked to lead cannot allow those who played by the rules to be pushed (punished). We cannot tell our people to lose hope and forget about expectations. It is imperative for elected leaders to provide inspiration and to deliver.

Each of our national governments has its own unique concerns and responsibilities, and it is not my role to tutor others.

But it is clear that we (all) will be more successful if we consult and learn from one another and move ahead in concert. Leaders before us understood and acted some 30 years ago to devise economic cooperation so our progress would be more than the sum of our single parts. We can learn from them by seeking to unite our economic efforts now.

The first step, in my view, is to acknowledge the deficit in openness — political as well as economic — in our societies. This is a painful subject and my country is not immune from these concerns. All of us will not develop political and economic institutions in the same way. East Asia is a big place marked by diversity in languages, cultures, and religions. These differences should be respected, even celebrated. But we have also have convergence of interest in certain areas, particularly in achieving economic prosperity.

Despite our differences, there is a compelling need for democratic means, for more transparent economic and banking practices, for more educational opportunities, for a chance to compete fair and square in a level-playing field to get ahead, and for more equitable distribution of economic wealth. These are the demands for market and political openness and transparency that we hear from simple people, from people frightened by economic forces beyond their control. It is striking to me that they are exactly the same prescriptions that we hear from economists and financiers. When Alan Greenspan and the common people have the same view, perhaps we should listen. It is a truism that the voice of the people reflects the voice of the almighty.

Now there have been many reasons offered by analysts — and politicians, too — for the problems we now face.

But let us remember a few home truths. Foreign capital played no small role in (the) Asian growth miracle. Foreign capital also is fickle: it chases profit, and abhors risk; and it is not captive to our wishes. If we want capital to return, we must make it worth the while of investors

A month ago, President Clinton called for urgent consultations to cope with what he rightly termed “the biggest financial challenge facing the world in a half-century.” And his call has been echoed by British Prime Minister Blair. Indeed, it is time for world economic leaders to deal with this crisis for what it truly is — not a superficial boil, not just an Asian flu, but a global convulsion.

As early as the APEC Summit in Vancouver last November, Prime Minister Goh has called our attention to the apparent need to adapt the global financial architecture to the new requirements of the times. I wholeheartedly agree. We are dealing with a new phenomenon, where massive amounts of capital move from country to country at electronic speed, bloating economies to fragile bubbles as they rush in, and shaking economies to their foundations as they take flight. These movements cause vast and systemic disruptions to the world economy.

But construction a new global financial architecture will take years, not months, not weeks. In the meantime, urgent action is required to stabilize the situation, stop the carnage of otherwise viable businesses, and ease the rising tide of human suffering.

The U.S. \$30-billion fund for Asia that Japan has recently announced and the World Bank’s initiative to sharply increase funding for social safety nets in countries undertaking painful reform should be most welcomed.

We hope to see other concrete action soon. Bigger interest rate and tax cuts in the U.S. plus growth-enhancing measures in Europe will immensely help. So will a steadfast implementation of Japanese banking and financial reforms. Japan should stimulate consumer spending to help East Asian exports. Above all protectionism cannot be allowed to rear its ugly head.

Indeed, true action should be more eloquent than spoken words.

Fortunately, most East Asian countries are already taking remedial measures to stabilize and stimulate their economies. The gains made during the past decades are not all gone. The region still has abundant human skills, experience, entrepreneurship, and other strengths. From the wreckage of financial and corporate systems, there is plenty that can be salvaged, refitted and improved. The adherence to social responsibility and community values remains strong despite the economic recession.

However, the crisis is also an opportunity to do more than simple repair work. It focuses (forces) us to examine not just what went wrong, but to determine what we need to prepare ourselves for a new and more competitive global economy.

From this perspective, there are four priorities that I believe the region has to address, and these are: deeper reform, deeper innovation, deeper commitment to social justice and deeper interdependence.

Whatever outsiders might be blamed for, it was internal weakness, more than anything else, that exposed emerging East Asia to the worst effects of sudden massive shifts in global capital flows.

In the past, leaky financial and banking systems were not serious obstacles to economic development. Neither were certain uncompetitive practices our businessmen had acquired during the period of rapid growth.

Clearly, this will not be the case in the 21st century.

In the Philippines, we had learned this bitter lesson as a consequence of past crises and our sad experience with crony capitalism. Before the present crisis struck, we had completed key finance and banking reforms. The Philippine Central Bank now enjoys policy independence from government to objectively pursue its mandate of securing overall financial stability. Our banks now have an average capital adequacy ratio of 17.3 percent, one of the highest in the region, comparable to those in Hong Kong and Singapore, and well in excess of our statutory minimum of 10 percent. Our banking system is only moderately leveraged, with total loans as a percentage of GDP at less than 70 percent. The non-performing loan ration for all banks is manageable at 10.2 percent as of May 1998.

Privatization and deregulation of various economic sectors continue. A comprehensive tax reform package has been legislated. Trade and investment liberalization will continue, to ensure competitive efficiency. And agriculture — the long-neglected sector providing livelihood to the vast majority of our people — will receive high priority and full support from my government. Weather permitting, we expect to continue chalking positive growth this year, and by some three percent in 1999.

My government is pro-poor and pro-business. I believe that the way to help the poor is through job creation and through sustained economic growth.

The reforms now being undertaken throughout the region must be deeply institutionalized. Band-aid remedies will not do. Change is necessary in order to survive.

To stay at the forefront of the global economy in the next century, our region must use standards of accountability. Corporate behavior, and an early warning and surveillance device as components of a wide transparency effort. These are meant to keep our economies on the path to fiscal discipline and reform.

Alongside deeper reform, we need deeper innovation. East Asia has made tremendous strides in development. The first wave of industrialization brought us from old-fashioned production into modernized agro-industry and manufacturing.

And now we must launch a second industrialization wave where higher productivity, and not just more production, will become more important. We need to restructure our industries along vertical streams and horizontal linkages that support sustainable development.

This brings me to the third priority, namely, a deeper commitment to social justice.

Reforms will take care of the immediate emergency and mid-term adjustment. Innovation will strengthen our business and our trade. By themselves, however, reform and innovation cannot do the whole job of ensuring sustainable growth.

Economic activity does not occur in a vacuum. Business takes place in a social environment that may be healthy or decaying.

And our war against poverty is far from over. Our region is still one of stark contrasts between the rich and the poor. Against this backdrop, there can be no economic adjustment without extensive safety nets for the poor who will suffer most from change through no fault of their own.

Over the longer run, even after the crisis, those who have seen how precarious their livelihoods are will insist on more socially responsible governance. For if there are such things today as financial, economic, environmental and development sustainability, there will be such a thing tomorrow as social sustainability. The modern conscience will not tolerate exploitative and inhumane conditions that were ignored in the past while the region marched forward.

After the shock of the crisis, people will want both social improvement and security; and they will support those leaders who promise to give these to them. This will be the major political fact for most of East Asia in the next century.

In the future, popular demands for better living conditions will intensify. This is good news for the world investors, because it will mean that East Asia will want more investment in social infrastructure than it could possibly generate on its own.

Government budgets will not be able to cover these needs either. There will have to be greater private sector participation in infrastructure development.

And it is not only a question of bringing in funds. New systems for using those funds must be devised. The private demand for profit to offset risk will have to be balanced with social demands for access, equity and reasonable cost.

Another area with enormous political (potential) for foreign participation will be in the modernization of capital and bond markets and in the management of pension and social security funds. Pressure for change is coming not only from the need to mobilize capital for infrastructure but also to cope with increased societal aging.

Long-term growth calls for deeper interdependence, for more linkages, within East Asia and with the rest of the world.

The momentary collapse of East Asian demand has shown us that global trade strategies are critical. Demand from other regions is now crucial for our regional recovery, particularly with Japan's sluggish growth.

Of course, East Asian economic integration will proceed. A vibrant regional economy is good for its members and for all other countries as well. AFTA targets should not only be maintained they must be accelerated. And at next month's APEC leaders' meeting in Kuala Lumpur, we will support reaffirmation of the Bogor objectives and

targets. We will also seek enhanced implementation of APEC ecotech cooperation. We all need to actively participate in charting and enforcing fair trade rules.

Moving beyond trade, East Asia must also be part of the effort to create a global financial system for the 21st century. And all of us, not just a few economies, must contribute thinking and experience in the elaboration of the new architecture. And I feel strongly that the new architecture – even the current one – should incorporate elements of the 1997 Manila framework for restoring financial stability.

Even as we take care of our economy, we will have to manage the political and security dimensions of regional stability which we must preserve to sustain growth into the 21st century.

Let us not forget that our region was only recently a tinderbox of inter-ethnic tension, a cockpit of ideological rivalry, and a focal point of strategic competition by outside powers.

While there is no immediate danger of hostilities, it cannot be denied that there are potential sources of instability in East Asia which could have implications on the economy.

There is still a constant search for permanent peace in the Korean peninsula. Tension could arise if territorial disputes in the South China Sea are not addressed peacefully and with restraint while the Taiwan straits could erupt as a flashpoint if allowed to boil over.

We are also witnessing the emergence of new transboundary threats to security, such as terrorism, piracy, illegal trafficking of drugs and even women and children, illegal trade in weapons, and transboundary pollution. These are issues that tear at the social fabric of our region.

Security has assumed a broad and comprehensive dimension. It must be addressed by the collective will of all concerned.

ASEAN, APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum exist as mechanisms for consultation, dialogue, and cooperation on the issues that threaten our economic, social and political well-being.

We must remain steadfast in our belief on the validity of these regional approaches.

East Asia's passage to the next century is beset by many pitfalls.

There is no guarantee that if we hurdle the present economic crisis, the road ahead will be a well-paved avenue to traverse. We must not be deluded by such thinking.

Our past has served us well, but we must be fully aware of the challenges as well as the opportunities of the new millennium. We should follow the correct signposts so that the next generation cannot accuse us of betraying its hopes and expectations.

So ladies and gentlemen, thank you again for giving me this chance to talk to you this morning. (Applause)

Source: **University of the Philippines Diliman Library**

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638

Speech of President Estrada at the 55th General Membership Meeting of Semiconductor and Electronics in the Philippines Inc. (SEIPI) and SEIPI's Centennial Christmas with the Philippine President, December 1, 1998

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the 55th General Membership Meeting of Semiconductor and Electronics in the Philippines Inc. (SEIPI)
and SEIPI's Centennial Christmas with the Philippine President**

[Delivered at New World Hotel, Makati, December 1, 1998]

PRIDE IN OUR EXPORTS

I am deeply honored to speak before this gathering of key players in the manufacturing industry of the semiconductor and electronics technology. I wish to congratulate the officers and members of the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Inc. (SEIPI) for successfully holding its 55th General Membership Meeting.

So far, this is the first invitation that I have received to celebrate the Centennial Christmas. It is a privilege on my part to join you tonight in this advanced Christmas celebration

The microchip is one of the greatest accomplishments of the twentieth century. A quarter of a century ago, such claim would have seemed absurd. Today, however, microchips move closer to the center of our lives, taking a place in the heart of one machine after another.

Today, microchips make most of the things that we use. It has changed not only the quality of the products we produce but our lifestyle as well.

In the past years, your industry has made major contributions in this fast changing world. As we move towards the next millennium, innovations have been taking place so rapidly that daily life without micro-processors has become unimaginable.

I was told that you have recently changed the name of your organization from Semiconductor and Electronics Industry Foundation, Inc. (SEIFI) to Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines, Inc. (SEIPI). This is to emphasize not only your geographical location but your identity as well. It is also consistent with your objective to expand the coverage of your membership both here and abroad.

I am also glad to note that you have plans of bringing in the small and medium-sized companies into your group. As we all know, small and medium scale enterprises are likewise vital to our economic development. By absorbing them in, there will be more opportunities for exchange of ideas and information regarding the latest developments in the semiconductor and electronics industries. We welcome your move towards supporting our small and medium sized enterprises.

Through your flagship program “JET” — which stands for job, exports and technology — you express your [willingness to contribute to the advancement of our common goals of job generation, enhanced exportation, and technology dissemination.] I hope that you will continue to create more plans and programs that are directed towards these ends.

Similarly, I expect you to further enhance your support and participation in the development initiatives and efforts of our Government, especially in programs geared towards alleviating the living conditions of the poor.

The Philippines is one of the least affected by the financial crisis sweeping Asia. We are confident that the Philippines will soon recover from it.

We have avoided a deep recession. The stock market has made a very strong recovery. Inflation rate for the first ten months remains within our single-digit target. Interest rates are going down. The peso is getting stronger. Our banking system remains stable and is recognized as one of the strongest and most resilient in the region.

He said, "I am pleased to note that your industry employs 200,000 engineers and technical workers. It will be a big boost to our economy that your industry continues to provide jobs for thousands of Filipinos."

"I encourage you to continue inviting other global player's in the electronics industry to relocate and expand their base operations in the Philippines." In spite of ongoing economic crisis in Asia, our country's economic prospects and the confidence of local and foreign investors remain strong. This confidence is apparent in the continued establishment of new businesses here in the last few months and the expansion of the businesses earlier established here.

Secretary Pardo has informed me that your industry accounts for more than 60% of now. In 1997, your export totalled US\$ 15 billion and your projection is US\$45 billion at the end of my term.

I am glad that the manufacturing technologies in semi-conductor and electronics are being transferred by the SEIPI group to Filipino engineers and workers. Training our manpower is one of the key factors in our country's development. I am happy to know that your industry allots 40 hours of training to your employees.

All of these developments in your industries are good news for my Administration and for the whole Filipino nation. I assure you that under my leadership, we will do our best to make the environment for your business more conducive to growth so you could hurdle the challenges and changes your industry will face in the years ahead.

Maraming salamat po. Mabuhay kayong lahat. Merry Christmas to all.

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

Speech of President Estrada at the Conference “Changing Tides: Rethinking Philippine-American Relations in the New Global Environment”, December 3, 1998

**Speech
of**

**His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines**

At the Conference “Changing Tides: Rethinking Philippine-American Relations in the New Global Environment”

[Delivered at the ACCEED Conference Center, Makati City, December 3, 1998]

**SHAPING PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN
RELATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

I would like to congratulate the Carlos P. Romulo Foundation and its Chairman, a most distinguished son of the General, former Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Roberto P. Romulo, for organizing this important Conference.

I had a special affinity with General Romulo, whose first wife, the former Virginia Llamas of Pagsanjan, was a very good friend of my father. There was a certain fondness that the General lavished on me as a young boy and the ties that my parents forged with the couple engendered my deep admiration and respect for the General.

General Carlos P. Romulo was a pillar of Philippine diplomacy and it is only fitting that the Foundation that bears his name should hold this Conference at this point in our progress as a nation.

The world around us has changed, but our exposure to the influence of external events has remained. We are confronted by new opportunities and challenges. We have to manage new types of external threats and collaborate in new forms of international cooperation.

With so much rapid change, it is always good to have friends, especially old friends like the United States, with whom we can work together in making this new world safer and more secure.

It is true that the Philippines and the United States began as enemies at the turn of this century. However, what began in war ended in peace; where we were once enemies, we are now friends and allies.

Filipinos and Americans fought together during World War II and in the Korean peninsula. We were partners in the great struggles of the Cold War in East Asia. The U.S. security umbrella helped the Philippines and the majority of nations in our region pursue economic development and ward off communism.

Yet, at the same time, there were strains in our partnership, strains that were associated with the U.S. military bases in our country.

Those bases posed a dilemma. They were pillars of containment which benefited the whole region, but many Filipinos, myself included, felt that they infringed on Philippine sovereignty.

In 1991, the Philippine Senate, of which I was then a member, took the historic decision to terminate our Bases Agreement. In doing so, we opened a new chapter in Philippine-American relations, a chapter that we are still in the process of writing.

Let me make one point very clear. When I voted against the Bases Agreement, I was not voting against America or our partnership with America. I was voting for the sovereignty of the nation and that is not anti-America.

Filipinos and Americans have too much in common, that is why we share fundamental values and essential interests.

We both love democracy and we have both defended democracy.

We both respect universal human rights and we both advocate social openness.

We both know that political and economic policies which empower people, enhance personal freedoms, and liberate individual talent and energy are the best policies for improving living standards and alleviating poverty.

These shared values provide the deep understructure for the new chapter in Philippine-American relations that we are now drafting. There are three major parts to this new chapter: a political and security part; an economic part; and a part devoted to direct people-to-people ties.

Of the three, the political and security dimension requires our most immediate attention. Our economic relationship is diversifying and our business sectors are already very close. The links between our peoples are solid and are growing stronger every day.

In the political and security area, we have to rework the way in which we cooperate in a post-Bases and post-Cold War environment. There are security problems in our region, such as the continuing issue of Mischief Reef and of the South China Sea. Against this background, it is in our interest to maintain our Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) with the United States.

From this perspective, we can see that the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) is essential to ensure that the MDT can operate in practical terms. My Administration has openly stated that the VFA's ratification is important because the VFA serves our national interest. Simply put, the VFA will make it easier for the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the U.S. military to conduct joint exercises and other activities that any defensive alliance must have in order to be effective.

In addition, we should be able to use our alliance to assist the urgent task of modernizing our Armed Forces. Hi-tech armaments do not in themselves guarantee security; but a defense modernization program, buttressed by a credible alliance, can have a deterrent value that is obviously an advantage for the Philippines.

Although the United States may be the world's last remaining Superpower, that power may not be used effectively without the cooperation of allies and the support of regional organizations and the United Nations.

We have certain responsibilities as allies to help the United States retain its regional security presence. The holding of regular joint military activities and defense policy consultations are some of the ways that this can be done. For practical reasons, we have to do our part to sustain the American security presence that benefits all of us.

We look forward to strong cooperation with America in three critical areas to promote comprehensive regional security cooperation.

First, the United States helps maintain the region's security balance. The United States holds the key to preserving calm on the Korean peninsula and in the ties between China and Japan.

Second, as the last remaining Superpower, as the key mediator in crises all over the world, and as our region's largest export market, the United States stands more than ever as the *primus inter pares* among us. This translates into unparalleled influence that must be used wisely to benefit all of us.

It is in America's best interest to use the type of consensus politics and community building that distinguished ASEAN in its role as a regional stabilizer. No other diplomatic method has approached ASEAN's in successfully managing differences and cooperation within a highly diverse region such as ours.

The diversified nature of our region means that differences have to be accepted as facts of life. Highlighting what separates us will not advance the general welfare within our region. It is fortunate that we have nevertheless found basis to have consensus amongst us and we are gratified that America has helped us in this regard.

On the political side of the regional security equation, what is called for is the politics of engagement and inclusion, wherever practicable. Bilateral problems should not get in the way of regional cooperation. Countries can express their views on what democracy, human rights and free markets mean to them. What is important is that we all remain willing to work at building a regional security community, no matter how divergent our views may be.

The gravest threat at the moment to the region's stability is economic, not military. Our region is struggling to overcome the massive blow of a financial crisis. It is recovery from this crisis that should be the number one agenda item for regional cooperation these days.

The economic side has two factors. First, we have to keep our region on course towards greater economic liberalization, openness and cooperation. In today's era of globalization, these are the only options. We have to stay on that path — in APEC and the WTO, in AFTA and other sub-regional economic groups — to foster conditions that will show our peoples that we have a bigger stake in cohesion than in division.

However, this is for the long run. Because of the financial crisis, poverty is once again on the offensive throughout the region. Millions of people and thousands of families are desperately holding the line. The second factor, therefore, must be sensitivity and compassion. These are people, our people, we are talking about. They deserve help, not lectures on political economy.

We appreciate the backing of the United States for more spending on social safety nets and for emergency measures to guard against the return of absolute poverty. We support American and other efforts to increase the resources of the IMF and the World Bank and to strengthen their ability to respond to new issues spawned by the global economy.

If our region's crisis has taught us anything, it is that we must act faster for damage limitation. Had larger assistance been made available sooner — from the development banks, from the private sector, and from concerned countries — the human cost of the crisis might have been considerably lessened. Globalization must never be paid for again with such heavy expense in human life and dignity.

The third and last area where strong links with America is needed is in preparing the region for the future. At the moment, East Asian countries are preoccupied with pulling through the crisis. So, by default, the United States has a stronger than usual position in our region to shape the rules to govern the emerging regional order.

The regional agenda for this kind of rule-making is enormous.

In the political and military areas, we have to establish rules in the form of codes of conduct, confidence building, and preventive diplomacy in areas where territorial claims overlap, such as in the South China Sea.

A new generation of security threats — global terrorism, environmental degradation, transnational crime, gun-running, the illegal trade in narcotics and trafficking in human beings — have to be confronted.

The ASEAN Regional Forum should be given a more substantive role in promoting regional security consultation and cooperation.

In the economic arena, rules are required to bring order to an increasingly complex global economy. New sectors like information technology, electronic commerce, hedge funds, and cooperation on the use of natural resources, command our attention.

Issues concerning social, labor and environmental standards will become more important and will require careful management.

Globalization will bring our economies and societies closer together. This will not always be comfortable. Old-fashioned international commerce stopped at the border; global economic interaction does not. What happens in one country will become increasingly relevant not only to its neighbors but also to countries far afield. Our concerns over policies and developments in other countries that impact upon our own will grow.

Under these conditions, we need to engender, above all, a more tangible sense of regional solidarity and of community that will allow us to transcend our differences. The notion of community well-being was sorely tested by the financial crisis. Fortunately, we found ways to come to each other's assistance.

I am glad to note at this point that the Philippines has withstood the negative effects of the crisis better than our neighbors in the region. This we attribute to our strong democracy, the political maturity of our people, and our good economic foundations based on the principles of liberalization, deregulation and free-market economy. I assure everyone that my Administration will pursue the same political, economic and social policies that will ensure our stability and steady recovery from the crisis.

I am certain that we will be able to do so, especially with my strong pro-poor bias. I believe that economic development can never be sustained here or anywhere else in the world unless the problem of poverty is addressed.

President Aquino has gained worldwide admiration for restoring our democracy. President Ramos turned around our economy due to the reforms he had successfully implemented. I would like to be remembered in history as the President who championed the cause of the masses. As I have always done before, I will continue to be guided by my formula to decide on what can bring about the greatest good for the number.

Thank you very much and good day.

Source: **University of the Philippines Main Library**

Speech of President Estrada during the Awarding Ceremonies of the Ten Outstanding Young Filipinos (TOYF) of the Philippine Jaycees, December 4, 1998 Speech

of

His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada

President of the Philippines

During the Awarding Ceremonies of the Ten Outstanding Young Filipinos (TOYF) of the Philippine Jaycees

[Delivered at Ceremonial Hall, Malacañang, December 4, 1998]

THE OUTSTANDING YOUNG FILIPINOS
AND THE SPIRIT OF ACHIEVEMENT

Magandang hapon at mabuhay sa ating Philippine Junior Chamber of Commerce o Jaycees, kasama ang lahat ng ating mga piling panauhin. Ipinaabot ko ang aking mainit at masiglang pagbati sa inyong lahat sa okasyon ng ating parangal para sa Outstanding Young Filipinos o TOYF sa taong kasalukuyan.

Sa taong ito, ipinagdiriwang natin ang mayaman at makulay na tradisyon ng Philippine jaycees sa ating bansa. Ipinagdiriwang natin hindi lamang ang ika-limampung taon ng jaycees sa Pilipinas, kundi ang ika-apatnapung taon ng pagpili at pagkilala sa outstanding young Filipinos na sinimulan noong taong 1959 bilang Ten Outstanding Young Men o TOYM.

Ito ay isang karangalan na patuloy na nagbibigay ng sigla at nagsisilbing inspirasyon sa ating bansa, lalo na sa ating mga kabataan. Ang mga naging awardee nito ay itinuturing ngayong mga pinuno at mga haligi ng iba't-ibang sektor ng ating lipunan — ng ating pamahalaan, ng mga kalakal at industriya, at ng iba't-ibang propesyon.

The award and recognition for the outstanding young Filipinos conferred by the Philippine Jaycees have become an enduring and noble tradition. From its beginnings as the Ten Outstanding Young Men, it remains today to be one of the more powerful expression of recognition accorded to outstanding and achieving young men and women in our country. It has now become gender sensitive, perhaps, in keeping with our times, to become an award for outstanding young men and women who have excelled in various and diverse fields.

For that matter, the TOYF today is not just an award; it is a badge and stamp of honor and outstanding achievement and leadership; it has become a prestigious and credible institution in Philippine society, observed and celebrated annually by an equally prestigious and credible organization.

The renaming of the award from TOYM to TOYF was no doubt in keeping with the times for it to be more politically correct and gender sensitive. However, the Jaycees may consider reverting to the original name because it already has its own identity and it may lose the prestige and glamour which the earlier awardees have given to it.

I guess women would not mind being called TOYM awardees as this had been done in the past. Some may even deem it to be the highest tribute — for women to be in the same league with men.

I have a certain fondness for the Jaycees not because J.V. is now its national president, and certainly not simply because it conferred me the TOYM Award for Public Administration in 1972. Incidentally, I consider this award as one of the shining moments of my career which encouraged, motivated, and inspired me.

But my affinity with the Jaycees goes farther back from my career as a public servant. As I have mentioned before, the San Juan Jaycees was instrumental in encouraging me to serve our people and to run for public office as mayor. In this job, I found the meaning of the Jaycee goals of management skills, of community service, of brotherhood, of the development of individual talents, and of the importance of high and ethical business standards in the public service.

Because of my experiences as mayor of San Juan and the influence of the TOYM award, I developed a desire to help the people, not just of my town but of the entire nation. This is the reason why my administration is focused on helping the masses.

By now, you must have heard of the priorities of my government. Your group, because of its leadership qualities, can help me realize my vision of improving the living conditions of our people and bringing about the reforms that our society needs.

You can help our peace and order campaign by creating awareness among our communities to be vigilant against criminal activities. You can promote agricultural development and food security by engaging in businesses related to them and helping in bringing down the prices of essential commodities. You can help eradicate graft and corruption by bearing in mind that this involves not only the taker but also the giver.

These three major thrusts are close to the Jaycees and the TOYM awardees because their orientation, training and expertise have properly prepared them to advance these causes. For the awardees in particular to be truly deserving of their award, they must continue their work and aim to achieve more, even after having earned this prestigious citation.

Ako, kailangang pagbutihin ang trabaho. Kailangang patunayan sa lahat na karapat-dapat ka para sa parangal na ito. Kung TOYM awardee ka hindi puwede ang palpak, kailangan palakpak. Ito ang naging prinsipyo ko noong ako ay naging senador at vice-president. Kaya siguro pinalad tayo ngayong maging pangulo ng bansa dahil binigyan ko ng pansin ang mga prinsipyong kinakatawan ng mga Jaycees.

You will perhaps agree with me that we cannot consider the Outstanding Young Filipinos Award simply for what it is, but for what it has done, for what it has become, and for what it has fulfilled. We cannot simply look at it now as an honor society, where the celebrated and the celebrating converge to measure or define what achievement must be and should be.

No, we cannot simply view it as a ritual that glorifies time and again individual achievement. Instead, we must look at it as a system that seeks to accentuate and enhance our strengths that must be nourished positive energies and values.

In various ways, the TOYF proclaims the best in us, serving to inspire many generation of Filipinos who seek role models and shining examples of how challenges and opportunities in their lives can be conquered.

Many of them may not have the opportunity to come up in this stage to receive the ovation. But certainly, they will discover a feeling of pride, and perhaps, a sense of identity, of association, of fulfillment, in their search for a better road in the pursuit and management of their ambitions.

The TOYF has now become a symbol of Filipino capacity and talent. To my mind, it is an institution that we no longer can reserve exclusively for the 324 individuals who have received it. It belongs not just to the Jaycees, but to our countrymen who find in it a showcase and an exhibit of Filipino accomplishment, of Filipino achievement and of Filipino talent. It represents our claim and aspirations for excellence as Filipinos. It helps inculcate the dignity of responsibility and the habits of citizenship. I hope that I can serve here as an example.

Today, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Philippine Jaycees for propagating the noble spirit of achievement and its rewards into the consciousness of the Philippine society.

Our people share with you this spirit, for we have learned, crisis after crisis has come and gone. But we stood firm, because in our consciousness is that capacity to endure and to overcome. Deep in ourselves is that unwavering spirit to survive, and we survived because we have the capacity to achieve. This award has, in its forty years, nurtured that capacity by strengthening the morale of our people, and weaving the fabric of community service.

This afternoon, I also take this opportunity to congratulate our awardees composed of brilliant individuals in the fields of medicine, music, communication arts and education.

You are joining today a select and distinguished company who would demand from you a much higher standard not just of competence, but of a higher order of morality and of service. You represent what we see as the best in your field, a cut above the rest.

But I ask you not to simply dedicate your talents to your profession or your discipline, but to the ends and visions of our larger society. It is in this arena of serving our people where the real challenge lies. It is here where you will discover the true nature of accomplishment. It is here where the real meaning of achievement must and should be measured. This is where you must be ready to share your skills, because being outstanding is a celebration of your contributions to the future of our nation.

Walang tutulong sa Pilipino kundi kapwa Pilipino.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay!

Source: **University of the Philippines Diliman Library**

Speech of President Estrada at the Ateneo Alumni Homecoming, December 5, 1998

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the Ateneo Alumni Homecoming**

[Delivered in Loyola Heights, Quezon City, December 5, 1998]

ONE BIG FIGHT — AGAINST POVERTY

I wish to thank the Ateneo Alumni Homecoming Association for bringin me back to where I have always belonged.

During my entire career as a movie actor, I was never invited to any Ateneo Alumni Homecoming. Nor was I invited here during my entire sixteen years as Mayor of San Juan. I became a Senator, and still, no invitation came.

Then, in 1992, after my election as Vice-President, I was finally asked to come. At that time, since I was not even part of the scheduled program, I had to give an impromptu speech. As we all know, no speaker — not even the Pope — can keep an audience of Ateneans quiet during their homecoming. But the crowd fell into a hush when they saw I had no prepared speech. They were all waiting for me to make a blunder in my English, but I am sorry I disappointed them.

Now that I am President, I *finally* got an invitation to be your guest speaker. For those of you still expecting grammatical mistakes, I am afraid I will have to disappoint you again.

During the campaign, one of the issues against me was that I was not a college graduate. Normally, it would have been a valid issue. If you come from some other schools, you would probably need at least a college degree to be considered qualified to be President. But if you come from the Ateneo, all you need is to have finished second year high school!

So now, for the first time in history, an Atenean has been elected President of our Republic. Other brilliant alumni — like Claro M. Recto, Raul Manglapus, and Emmanuel Pelaez — tried in the past but, unfortunately, were not successful. It took a drop-out Joseph Ejercito Estrada to bring home the trophy to the Ateneo.

Even after what the Ateneo did to Joseph Ejercito.

During the campaign, my critics called me a drop-out. That was a mistake. I did not drop out from the Ateneo, I was expelled! And not for academic reasons — my grades then were quite respectable, thank you — but for a disciplinary issue.

My offense was fighting a burly American classmate who was bullying another classmate much smaller than he. I told him to pick on someone his size, and he took up my challenge.

Who won the fight? Because I am now President, that must remain a state secret. But this much can now be said: had I not been expelled from the Ateneo, I probably would not have ended up as President of the Philippines!

But the Ateneo also paid a price for my expulsion. My Cabinet now is not all-Ateneo. While my Secretaries of Foreign Affairs and Energy are Blue Eagles, my Executive Secretary and my Trade and Industry Secretary come from — what's the name of that school again?

I must say that I was *proud* to be expelled for a reason that would be a driving force not just in the movies I appeared in but throughout my political career. I was defending the underdog. And I will continue to do so, regardless of the consequences to me.

And so, I now say to the Ateneo: I forgive you! Obviously, you also want to forget what you did to me! Let me put it this way. The school was just doing its job, and I was doing mine.

I will not embarrass you by asking how many of you did not vote for me in the last elections. But I will now give you a chance to redeem yourselves by asking how many of you support me now.

Your applause shows that, contrary to rumors, Ateneans are human after all: they will support any winner after he has won!

I am pleased to inform you that the overriding theme of my Administration derives its inspiration from something I picked up at the Ateneo. When I was a young student, both at Padre Faura and here at Loyola Heights, our most memorable cheer was “one big fight!”

That is what my presidency has launched: one big fight — against poverty. This is the meaning of “*Erap para sa Mahirap*.” It is the vision and mission of my Administration. It is also my personal, philosophical, and organizational driving force. It is the animating principle of my program of government.

The premise of “*Erap para sa Mahirap*” is that the overriding problem of our country is poverty. All other problems are subordinate to it. The central and dominant thrust of my Government is the elimination of poverty. All other issues are subordinate to it.

The very vocabulary we use concerning poverty shows the elitist bent of our mindsets. We talk merely of “alleviating” poverty when, in fact we should be *eliminating* it. We refer to the poor as “marginalized” when, in fact, they are the *mainstream* of Philippine society.

How can the poor be “marginal” when they are the largest single sector of our society? It is true that Jesus Christ said, “the poor you will always have with you.” But he did not say that they had to constitute the majority.

Under my presidency, the war on poverty will be the main business of the entire Government. My Administration will make the poor not the end-beneficiaries of the so-called “trickle-down” economics but the very starting point of development.

Contrary to some impressions, “*Erap para sa Mahirap*” is not just a slogan but a dynamic evolving program. It is based on the principle that widespread poverty is not just a moral shame but also bad economics. As resources, the poor are of low productivity. As markets, they are thin and narrow. My Presidency intends to convert them into highly-productive factors and into income-earning markets.

My Administration is pro-poor, pro-business and pro-market. There is no conflict among the three. They are in synergy with one another.

The vision calls for converting the poor into two things at once: productive human resources and a growing domestic market. To become productive, they will need food, homes, better education, and adequate health care. To constitute a market, they will need jobs and incomes.

My Government’s programs in food security, housing, education and health are aimed at enhancing their mental and productive skills. And our investment policies and programs will be re-designed to provide them with jobs and incomes. As we look abroad to encourage exports, we will also look towards the hinterlands to correct past neglect.

To provide more jobs, we will revamp the entire Investments Incentives System. We aim to promote more competitiveness, and a more leveled playing field. Our entire Investment Laws will be revamped to provide what we might call a “preferential option for jobs” to reinforce our “preferential option for the poor.” We look forward to the day when our countrymen working abroad will come to jobs within their own country.

We will modernize our agriculture to provide more food for our people. We will re-examine our Agrarian Reform Laws to gear them towards higher productivity.

Our health programs will focus on the creation and multiplication of primary health centers, and will concentrate more on general hospitals rather than specialized ones.

Our overall education program will aim to strengthen the quality of our primary levels, because these lay the foundation for improved secondary and college programs.

We are waging a relentless fight — in fact, I call it a personal war — against that monster that steals from the poor: graft and corruption. The money that should help create jobs, improve health, and provide textbooks and desks for the poor should not go into the pockets of corrupt traders conspiring with equally corrupt politicians and bureaucrats.

We are also waging a war on another front: crime. To the extent that it deters investments, it also robs the poor of opportunities for having incomes and jobs.

We will re-engineer the entire government machinery to eliminate waste and to make it a more efficient provider of public services.

Thus it can be said that my entire agenda is not “trickle-down” but *heave-up* economics. It will benefit the poor not at the expense of the rich but for the good of all. Trickle-down is too slow. And in the past, there was little trickle-down at all, but a continuing concentration of wealth and incomes at the top.

I like to believe that these thrusts and this vision are close to the hearts of Ateneans, who are trained to be- “men for others.” I, therefore, ask you to support me — your fellow Atenean — as I use the battleplans I have outlined to wage total war on poverty, with the kind military and missionary zeal that we learn from St. Ignatius Loyola.

Earlier, I said I forgive Ateneo and all of you for not inviting me in past homecomings. But my joining you tonight does not come without a price. You have to support me all the way during my entire term as penance for your sins!

I ask you that we all join together, as we used to at the bleachers in the past, to summon that old Ateneo spirit and confront the problems of our country with something that only Ateneans can muster: one big fight!

Thank you.

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638

Speech of President Estrada at the Courtesy Call of KEPCO and conferment of Presidential Award for Meritorious Foreign Investment on KEPCO President Young Sik-Chang, December 7, 1998

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the courtesy call of KEPCO and conferment of Presidential Award for Meritorious Foreign Investment on
KEPCO President Young Sik-Chang**

[Delivered at the Main Conference Room, Malacañang, December 7, 1998]

ANOTHER PROOF OF OUR ECONOMIC VIABILITY

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Mr. Young Sik-Chang — President and Chief Executive Officer of Korea Electric Power Corporation or KEPCO — for being the first recipient of the Presidential Award for Meritorious Foreign Investments.

His act of investing in the Philippines some 1.6 billion U.S. dollars in spite of the financial crisis also being experienced by his homeland, South Korea, is certainly worthy of our country's recognition.

We are giving this award for the first time to a foreign investor that has firmly committed to invest at least 1 billion U.S. dollars in the Philippines on a long-term basis. Such investments must be in priority areas like agriculture, power and infrastructure, and should contribute substantially to the well-being of the masses.

KEPCO, I understand, is one of the top four largest electric companies in the world, with total assets of 33 billion U.S. dollars. Here in the Philippines, they have just completed — in record time — the rehabilitation of the 650-megawatt Malaya 1 and 2 Power Plants in Pililia, Rizal at a cost of 200 million U.S. dollars. Their other project is the 1,200-megawatt Ilijan Gas Power Plant in Batangas, which, when completed, will be the largest in Southeast Asia.

KEPCO's presence in the local energy sector is the biggest Korean testimony to the economic strength and the viability of the Philippines as an investment hub in Southeast Asia. As South Korea's biggest company, KEPCO tops the list of Korean corporate giants currently operating in the Philippines, which include LG Collins, Samsung, Kia, Hyundai and Kumho Tires, among others.

KEPCO's continued presence here should encourage not only other Korean firms but also other foreign businesses to similarly set up shop in the Philippines.

While the Philippines is likewise facing difficulties just like our neighbors, we are confident that we can overcome the ongoing crisis. We are the only one in the region that expects a positive growth this year, as proven by our economic indicators.

We have outlined clear directions for our economic development, and we will stand by these thrusts. We will continue promoting a fair and free market economy based on global realities.

The mood is more business-friendly and, in particular, more foreign investor-friendly. The stance government is taking is more promotional than regulatory, and more supportive of exports, investments, industrial initiatives, and countryside development.

The general objective is to encourage more members of the private sector — both local and foreign — to participate in a greater number of activities that had been previously closed to them. As we continue to move forward in 1999, expect us to undertake more initiatives to attract greater investments from our overseas friends.

The strong points of the Philippines lie in its strategic location in Asia; its large domestic market dominated by a young population base; and its abundant supply of highly-trainable, highly- skilled, English-speaking manpower ideal for producing medium- and high-tech products.

One can also choose from a large number of economic zones and regional growth centers that are equipped with integrated infrastructure facilities needed by investors.

Likewise, we can boast of an improved peace and order situation under the present administration. We have moved decisively to calm the fears of our people about their personal safety and of companies to go about their business.

There has also been marked improvement in the overall industrial peace situation in the last few months. There were only 20 active strikes recorded from July to September this year, compared with 34 for the same period last year.

In this era of the World Trade Organization, it is imperative for us to join hands in strengthening our collective position in the large, more competitive marketplace of East Asia, the Asia/Pacific, and the world during the remaining years of the 20th century.

I, therefore wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to KEPCO — and to Mr. Chang, in particular — for their trust and confidence in us. We look forward to a much more fruitful partnership with you and your company.

Thank you and good day.

Source: **University of the Philippines Diliman Library**

**Speech of President Estrada at the International Congress on Women's Role in History and Nation Building,
December 8, 1998**

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the International Congress on Women's Role in History and Nation Building**

[Delivered at the Manila Midtown Hotel, Manila, December 8, 1998]

ENHANCING WOMEN'S ROLE IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I congratulate the National Centennial Commission-Women's Sector for organizing this very important event. This International Congress on Women's Role in History and Nation Building is a deliberate initiative to establish, recognize and document for posterity the Filipino women's role and contribution in the last one hundred years.

The role of Filipino women, their heroism, their accomplishments and their contributions in our nation's history have, for quite sometime, undeniably been left out in the pages of history. The Filipino women have unselfishly shared their talents, tended the family and even offered their lives for their country and their countrymen, yet they have not been accorded the recognition that they rightfully deserve.

This Congress, therefore, is a welcome contribution towards reeducating our people on the role and importance of women in society and in nation building. This should be just the initial step towards a nationwide recognition of the Filipino women's rightful place in our country's history. It is also a way of bestowing upon this highly potential force in society their long overdue respect as men's equal counterparts.

The enormous responsibilities of women, especially their contributions in building nations and institutions, are usually hidden by our parochial view of women being confined to housework, child care, and reproduction. But the Filipino women have come a long way from being just a plain housewife to an economically empowered manager of the home, a professional leader, and an institution builder.

Now, we know better, and we must continue to improve the situation so that the Filipino women may move on to noble areas and greener pastures deserving of their talents, energies and commitment.

According to a recent report of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, despite efforts from Congress and the Executive Branch, Filipino women have not yet attained full equality with men in positions of power and decision-making.

The report showed that while women comprised 54.3 percent of 1.32 million civil servants in 1996, 72.14 percent of them occupied middle rank positions. Elective and appointive public posts are still largely held by men although significant strides have been made in various sectors.

In the Tenth Congress, only 10 percent of the members of the House of Representatives and 16 percent in the Senate were women. The figure slightly rose in the present Congress. The 22-member Cabinet of the Ramos Administration only had four women at any one time, almost all of them as heads of departments and agencies traditionally led by women officials — education, health, tourism, social welfare and development. There are only 254 women in the 1,652-member Judiciary and only one women Justice in the Supreme Court since 1993. The Muslim Shari'a Court, which used to have a woman member, is now an all-men body.

Women still have to fight for their just due and their rights today, but fortunately, they now do so under an environment that is much more friendly to the realization of women's empowerment.

The Women Development and Nation-building Law, or Republic Act 7192, passed under President Corazon C. Aquino, recognizes the role and contribution of women in nation-building, ensures the fundamental equality of women and men, and provides women rights and opportunities equal to those of men. This was followed by the passage of other important laws during the term of President Fidel V. Ramos, including the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law and the Anti-Rape Law.

The Ramos Administration also created a gender-friendly culture and environment in Government. The process of gender mainstreaming calls for all three levels of our educational system, as well as all government training institutes, to implement gender-sensitivity trainings to create a more responsive environment for the transmission of core messages and values on gender equality.

To support the career development of women in government service, we have:

- Pursued the Career Advancement Program for Women in Government Service (CAPWINGS) of the Civil Service Commission, which seeks to enhance the participation of women in higher levels of management and eliminate discriminatory policies against women;
- Required government offices to submit women candidates for all nominations to government positions, to ensure that women are given equal career opportunities with those of men;
- Implemented the Local Scholarship Program for Bachelor's and Master's Degrees, which has benefited a total of 2,241 women in government service; and,
- Directed all government agencies to establish day care centers, to ensure that working women with young children are able to concentrate on their careers.

While we are proud of these many achievements, the women's agenda remains an unfinished business. It is the duty of the government to ensure that the irreversible advancement of Filipino women is continued and enhanced.

Our women are among those severely affected by the financial crisis now gripping Asia. We have to intensify efforts to provide for increased training and resources to increase employment for women. Reintegration and reemployment of returning women overseas workers need to be facilitated. We need to mitigate the impact of the El Niño and the coming La Niña on women and children in areas where difficulties have set in.

We must accelerate programs to enable women to benefit fully from our globalizing economy, while at the same time providing a more effective social safety net to support women during economic downturns. It is imperative that our anti-poverty programs are implemented fully to benefit women from the poorest sectors.

While a great deal has already been done, violence against women and children continues to persist. Violence against our migrant women is a serious area of concern, as well as the prostitution and trafficking of women and children.

The enforcement of our laws, such as the Anti-Rape Law, must be accompanied by an effective national family violence prevention campaign in cooperation with the many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are already active in this area.

We hope that the private sector will complement the initiatives of the Government in promoting women empowerment and pursue even more vigorously efforts that will advance the careers of working women in the country. Certainly, this is the direction being taken by the National Centennial Commission-Women's Sector in organizing this Congress.

We have advanced many steps forward from the initial ones taken by our foremothers, but the journey is still long and difficult. Through Congresses such as this, we can engender respect for and promotion of women's rights,

equality and empowerment such that, whatever twists and turns government policies may take, national leadership should remain unshakable in its commitments to women.

The names Gabriela Silang, Melchora Aquino, Gregoria de Jesus and the suffragists blazed the trail so that Filipino women today are able to enjoy the fruits of freedom and the blessings of democracy. A century after them, another set of women leaders have carried on their legacy — we have had the first woman President of the Republic and we currently have our first woman Vice-President.

May this Congress be a good starting point for Filipino women to renew their dedication and determination to succeed and gain prominence not only in their fields of endeavor but also to contribute meaningfully to our history and nation building.

Thank you and may you have a successful Congress.

Source: **University of the Philippines Main Library**

Speech of President Estrada at the opening of Stage I Phase I of the Metro Manila Skyway Project, December 10, 1998

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the Opening of Stage I Phase I of the Metro Manila Skyway Project**

[Delivered at the Skyway Toll Plaza, Bicutan, Taguig, December 10, 1998]

**ACCELERATIONG GROWTH THROUGH
MODERN ROAD PROJECTS**

Maraming salamat sa inyong paanyaya na pangunahan ko ang pormal na pagbubukas ng Villamor-Bicutan portion na ito no Metro Manila Skyway. Mahigit sa dalawan-daang libong motorista ang inaasahang makikinabang kapag natapos na ang buong proyektong ito.

Ito ang kauna-unahang major flagship project sa Metro Manila na binuksan ko mula nang ako'y maupong pangulo. Ako'y nagagalak at natapos ito nang mas maaga sa itinakdang panahon. Tamang-tama ang pagbukas ng bahaging ito bago mag-Pasko. Malaking ginhawa ang maibibigay nito sa napakalaking traffic problem lalo na kung Pasko. I wish to congratulate the Philippine National Construction Corporation and the PT Citra Lamtoro Gung Persada of Indonesia for jointly undertaking this project under the build-operate-transfer (B-O-T) scheme of our Government.

I also would like to commend our Indonesian friends and other partners of PT Citra for continuing to express confidence in our country. Your investment in this project will go a long way in our quest for economic stability. This is also a sign of the foreign investors' faith that all is well in our country.

I still remember when this project was first launched in 1993 during the time of my predecessor, President Fidel V. Ramos. There were many skeptics and critics who said that this project would never be completed for a number of reasons. Others even claimed that this project may not be good for the motorists and the commuters, but this inauguration proves them wrong.

Despite the onset of the economic crisis in Asia and the troubles in Indonesia, our partners have stuck it out with us. This further proves that private sector-led investments through the use of the B-O-T scheme can work. This is why I have been saying that I will intensify and increase joint private sector participation in critical infrastructure projects in the country.

The massive US\$ 2.5-billion Metro Manila Skyway is a 35-km elevated toll road which will link the South Luzon and North Luzon expressways through the heart of Metro Manila. The project also includes rehabilitating a 13.5-kilometer stretch that will link these two expressways along the eastern side of Metro Manila; this is Circumferential Road 6, or C-6, also to be called the Metro Manila Expressway.

The Metro Manila Skyway Project consists of four stages. What we are inaugurating today is just Phase 1 of the first stage, which involved the construction of a 4.71-kilometer elevated highway from Buendia to Bicutan. Phase 2 of this stage, which involves the rehabilitation of the expressway from Magallanes to Alabang, will be completed by June 1999.

When completed, this project will extend all the way to Balintawak.

In addition to this, our people can look forward to the completion of two mass rail transit development projects. MRT II is now constructing a 14-kilometer elevated line running from Santolan in Pasig City to Recto Avenue in

Manila. And MRT III involves the construction of a Metro Rail Transit System along EDSA from North Avenue in Quezon City to Taft Avenue in Pasay City.

This is just the beginning and investors can look forward to other profitable projects in other parts of the country in similar toll roads, mass transit systems, and other areas such as power plants, irrigation facilities, railroads, airports, and seaports.

The Manila Skyway and the Metro Manila mass rail transit systems are two important legacies of the Ramos Administration which I am privileged to continue under my Administration. I now give you my commitment not only to pursue them to completion with equal vigor but also initiate more projects like them to accelerate our country's development.

With the opening of this Villamor-Bicutan portion of the Skyway, we no longer have to wait long to experience the numerous benefits to be had from traveling on this toll road. One may choose to travel in style on top or travel comfortably on the existing road below it, which is also undergoing rehabilitation.

Nevertheless, the construction of the whole Skyway has been proceeding at a frenetic pace to immediately ease the traffic congestion that has become a way of life to most motorists and commuters North and South of Manila.

We shall continue to fast-track the construction of roads and bridges in strategic locations all over the country to link major growth centers with production areas and, in the process, provide an effective inter-regional trunk line network throughout the country.

The Skyway is a rational and efficient approach to our traffic problems this world-class infrastructure project responds to the worsening traffic scenario in the metropolis as now we would be able to conduct our trade and commerce faster and with more enthusiasm.

Furthermore this toll road network will bring our motorists to and from their destinations in an efficient, economical and time-saving manner, given the project's high standards in terms of design, technology, safety and comfort.

Sa ating mga kababayan, pangalagaan ninyong mabuti ang mga ganitong proyekto sapagka't ginawa ito hindi lamang para sa atin kundi para rin sa mga susunod pang henerasyon.

Maraming salamat at maligayang pasko sa inyong lahat.

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

**Speech of President Estrada at the 1998 Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas, December 11, 1998 Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the 1998 Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas**

[Delivered at the Ceremonial Hall, Malacañang Palace, Manila, December 11, 1998]

**FILIPINO EXCELLENCE BEYOND OUR
FRONTIERS**

Ipinaaabot ko ang aking taos-pusong pagbati sa lahat ng mga tumanggap ngayon ng parangal bilang natatanging mga Pilipino at organisasyon na nasa sa ibang bansa. Binabati ko rin ang Commission on Filipino Overseas sa pagbibigay ng parangal na ito.

Our recognition of the talents, contributions and achievements of our overseas Filipinos and our partner organizations overseas could not have come at a more opportune time. As my Presidency nears the end of its first six months, I hope to be able to clearly send out a message to the world — that the well-being of Filipinos overseas is a deep concern and sincere interest of this administration.

A popular Filipino saying goes: “*Ang hindi marunong lumigon sa pinanggalingan, hindi makararating sa paroroonan.*”

This saying reminds us to always remain humble and not lose sight of one’s beginnings amidst the success he has achieved. The Filipino migrant needs to maintain strong links with his roots and heritage, in order that he may find strength in his identity and character as a Filipino.

We cannot pretend to speak of our contributions to our country and community if we do not remember our origin or lose ties with our heritage.

Humility, kinship, humanity and strong links with one’s roots — these are the terms that best describe the virtues of our thirty awardees tonight. In these words lie the strength and character of nearly seven million Filipinos overseas and our partner organizations. It is in these terms that we find the essence of the Filipino spirit of “*makabayan*”.

Tonight, I join our people in paying tribute to twenty-two individuals and eight organizations from fourteen foreign countries who have shown exemplary achievements in their respective fields. Our “*pagbati*” on the observance of the month of overseas Filipinos is also a call upon other Filipinos abroad to help speed up the momentum of cooperation established by our distinguished awardees.

Even before globalization became a byword, our country has already been sharing its precious skilled human resources with other countries.

Migration has never been a stranger to Filipinos. It is a reality, borne not just out of the present world order, but anchored upon the people’s inherent desire to learn, discover, succeed, and, above all, survive.

Our awardees tonight and in the past years are people who have helped develop plans for international space programs, built palaces and museums, made breakthroughs in scientific discoveries, captivated people through their writings and paintings, steered and manned ships in the oceans of the world, managed international funds, cared for and sacrificed for children and parents not their own, and established educational programs to promote human understanding.

There are also others who, by their compassion, have been sharing their blessings with the underprivileged, the abandoned, the ethnic minorities. Still, there are those who tend to the needs of other migrants who have been neglected and are seldom served by the community and the world at large.

Many among those present today have pursued higher learning overseas and fulfilled their promise to return to help shape the course of our country's destiny.

The modest recognition we have bestowed upon this year's awardees are mere tokens of appreciation for their achievements. Their presence in other countries have helped make our world a better place to live in. Their work has given new meaning to the concepts of globalization and interdependence.

Time and again, Filipino migrants have been referred to as our "new heroes". They have been called as such because they have provided our country's economy with a safety net against financial collapse through their dollar remittances. From 1990 to 1997 alone, these amounted to more than twenty four billion dollars.

This view of their heroism, however, is rather simplistic. Heroism equated to remittances alone is heroism bought.

We find heroes among our migrants because they have made enduring sacrifices in the name of their country and people. They are heroes because of their selfless crusade for the betterment of others.

It is not my Administration's policy to perpetuate the present levels of overseas employment. We have no intention of pursuing a position that would make us the dispenser of skills and labor to the world.

I do not argue with the fact that migration is propelled by the economic realities of our times. But it is my Administration's wish to see that, one day, when options abound and choices are made, our people will decide to remain here, be with their families, and serve our country above any other.

My Administration's burning desire is to lift our country's poor to a level worthy of the dignity of man. My focus is on a dignified existence, not just economic survival. My commitment is to ensure that every Filipino will benefit from our country's development.

I want the Filipino migrant to have a dignified co-existence with others in his or her adoptive community. But my ultimate goal is to see all of our migrants come home one day to share with us the excellence that they have unselfishly shared with others. It is in our country, the Philippines, where they have to make their greatest and most enduring contributions.

It is in this light that we have earmarked much of the country's resources to health, social, educational, and agricultural services. We are vigorously promoting peace and order in our effort to bring back to every Filipino family the sense of security that has escaped them for some time.

The promotion of the well-being of overseas Filipinos remains as a strong pillar of our foreign policy. It is a responsibility that is firmly established in the programs and services of my Administration for overseas Filipinos and their families.

In addressing their problems, however, we see the need for a more pro-active approach in the development of solutions.

I, therefore, call upon our people to be more vigilant and responsible when they decide to migrate to foreign lands. Our Government shall provide the basis for such a decision.

It is for this reason that I take this opportunity to launch the Migrant's Advisory Information System, or MAIS. This is Government's response to our migrant's lack of preparation for the realities overseas.

Through this system, Filipino migrants can access the information they need on their destination countries, migrant support groups, Filipino overseas organizations, and Philippine embassies and consulates.

To sustain this worthwhile effort, I hereby direct the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Commission on Filipino Overseas (CFO) to coordinate with the concerned agencies to ensure that this initiative is expanded and disseminated in all regions.

The integration of the topic of migration in the school curriculum, which is currently being carried out by the CFO and the DECS in cooperation with the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, should be expanded and fully implemented to engage our people in a constructive process of education and reflection.

The long history of Filipino migration has also produced many children of Filipino migrants living in isolation from their roots and their cultural heritage. For many of these children, the Philippines remains an imaginary element in their consciousness.

To rectify this situation, I direct the Inter-agency Committee on Philippine Schools Abroad, which is co-chaired by the DFA and DECS with CFO as Secretariat, to vigorously expand its program to include currently unserved and underserved Filipino communities abroad. It is only by ensuring the development of the children of our overseas Filipinos that we can speak of full social integration.

I have included in my Administration's legislative agenda bills that will suppress the trafficking of our women overseas, establish absentee voting privileges, and amend the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act.

Finally, I leave this question for our overseas Filipinos: "would you be willing to answer my call for new ideas, help us make the best choices, and carry them out for the sake of our children's future?"

Tonight, I ask you to reflect upon this challenge. You have provided other nations skills and talents which helped them achieved prosperity. I hope you will find the time to do as much, if not more, for our country.

Sa lahat ng binigyan natin ng parangal sa araw na ito, nawa'y higit pa ninyong pagbutihin ang inyong mga gawain.

Sa inyong lahat, mga minamahal kong kababayan sa ibang bansa, isang maligayang pagbati sa darating na Pasko at Bagong Taon.

Mabuhay ang mga Filipinos overseas!

Maraming salamat at mabuhay tayong lahat!

Source: **University of the Philippines Main Library**

Speech of President Estrada at a meeting with the Filipino Community in Vietnam, December 16, 1998

Speech

of

His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada

President of the Philippines

At a meeting with the Filipino Community in Vietnam

[Delivered at Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, Hanoi, Vietnam, December 16, 1998]

ANG KAHANGA-HANGANG TRABAHO NG
MGA PILIPINO SA VIETNAM

Isang magandang gabi sa inyong lahat na mga mahal nating mga kababayan dito sa Hanoi. Nagpapasalamat ako sa inyong masiglang pagsalubong at pagtanggap sa akin, sa Unang Ginang, at sa aking mga kasama. Ako ay lubos na nagalak na makapiling ko kayong lahat ngayon. Ipinaaabot ko sa inyong lahat ang isang mainit na pagbati mula sa inyong mga mahal sa buhay at mga kababayan sa Pilipinas, lalo na sa Araw ng Kapaskuhan.

Nitong mga nakaraang buwan, nagkaroon ako ng pagkakataon na makapiling ang ating mga kababayan sa Singapore at Malaysia. Ito ang pangatlong pagkakataon ng aking pagbisita sa ibang bansa at siyempre, hindi makakalimutan ni Erap na makasama ang ating mga kababayan dito sa Vietnam.

I have noticed that, wherever we are, our trademark of being a vibrant and happy people is very apparent. Surely, a people with such life and spirit can surmount any problems and difficulties that will come their way.

I am informed that most of you here are professionals involved in highly skilled occupations. This makes the Filipino community here, which may be small in number in comparison to other countries, as an influential sector in Vietnamese society. You are providing very important services that are critical in the economic development of Vietnam. I hope that you will continue to serve as our Ambassadors of Goodwill who will help strengthen the relations between our two countries.

I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes and to congratulate our Filipino community in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for the contributions you have been making to the development of this country. You represent the pride of our people as Filipino expatriates who provide technical and managerial expertise to our fellow ASEAN citizens in Vietnam.

I am proud of you because our people are now known in other countries not only as being efficient and hard-working, but as leaders and experts here in Vietnam. This is our trademark and it is this quality that earns for us the respect and admiration of other countries.

Your achievements here will be the pride of our people. But your shame will be ours too, and I ask you of protect and preserve the dignity and integrity of our country at all times.

At this point, allow me to give you an update of the Philippine situation today, with emphasis on my agenda of governance.

My Administration is over 150 days old. I take this opportunity to report to you that, among the members of ASEAN, our country is the only one projected to have a positive growth this year. Our inflation rate for the last eight months is at a low 8.4 percent, and we hope to end the year within our inflation rate target.

Our currency is slowly stabilizing while foreign investments are gradually coming back. Our banking system remains stable and is one of the best capitalized in the region. By next year, we are optimistic that more fresh capital will be coming in. This is an optimism that is shared by both Government and the private sector.

We are now pursuing an agenda that will enable us to cope and deal with the challenges of the coming century. We are now addressing the problems brought about by the Asian financial crisis on our economy, with the hope of containing its impact on the marginalized sector of our society.

The pro-poor agenda of my Administration is now being implemented by all agencies of Government. We will transform the agricultural sector into a dynamic and competitive sector since the majority of our poor population are dependent on agriculture for employment and income. The modernization of this sector will be an effective strategy towards the attainment of food security and the reduction of rural poverty.

Indeed, we see better times ahead. We also see opportunities for stronger economic ties between the Philippines and the rest of the world – especially with our neighbors in ASEAN. And that includes Vietnam.

Mahalaga rin ang papel ng mga tulad ninyong nagtrabaha sa ibayong dagat dahil ang overseas Filipino workers ang isa sa mga pangunahing sektor na sumusuporta at nagtataguyod ng ating kabuhayan sa Pilipinas. Sa krisis na dinaranas natin ngayon dito sa Asya, kayo at ang iba pa nating mga manggagawa sa ibang bansa ang tumutulong na sumagip sa ating ekonomiya.

Talagang napakalaki ng inyong tulong sa ating pamahalaan para mapabuti ang pamumuhay ng ating mga kababayan, lalong-lalo na ang mga mahihirap.

You have worked hard and have made enduring contributions not only to your host country here but to the Philippines as well. In recognition of your dedication, our Government has adopted policies and has implemented programs and projects that seek to promote the welfare and well-being of our Filipinos living or working abroad.

I would like you to also know that we remain to be attentive of the needs of our countrymen in other countries. We seek to promote their welfare, because no matter where they are, *kahit ano pa ang trabaho, kahit ano pa ang Ingles*, they remain to be Filipinos.

To ensure that the needs of our migrant workers are being taken care of, we have designated an Undersecretary for Legal Assistance for migrant workers in the Department of Foreign Affairs. We also now have an Assistant Secretary for Overseas Workers in the Department of Labor. *Sila ay aking itinalaga upang mas higit nating masiguro na mapangangalagaan ang inyong kapakanan.*

Para sa mga overseas Filipino workers na nangangarap magkaroon ng sariling bahay pagbalik sa Pilipinas, inatasan ko na ang National Housing Authority na pag-ibayuhin ang kanilang Operation Pabahay Program upang makabilang ang mga OFW's sa programang ito. Mayroon na ring inilunsad na PAG-IBIG Housing Program para sa mga OFW's.

Mayroon na rin tayong mga ospital para sa OFW's. Tatlong tie-up clinics na ang naglilingkod sa mga OFW's sa Tokyo, Osaka, at Dubai. Mayroong sampu pang itatatag bago matapos ang taong ito.

Ngayong malapit na ang Pasko, alam kong marami sa inyo ang gustong na umuwi sa Pilipinas. Mayroon na tayong mga express lanes sa NAIA na nakatalaga lamang para sa mga OFW's.

During the awarding ceremonies for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas last December 11, we launched the Migrant's Advisory Information System or M.A.I.S. This system aims to provide migrants with the information they need regarding countries of their destination, the migrant support groups abroad, the Filipino overseas organizations, and the Philippine Embassies and Consulates. Vietnam is one of the countries included in the launching operation of the M.A.I.S.

Ang M.A.I.S. ay isa sa mga programang inilunsad ng ating pamahalaan upang matugunan ang kakulangan ng mga dumadayo sa ibang bansa ng preparasyon at kaalaman tungkol sa kanilang pupuntahan.

I will continue to listen to your concerns. Here in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, we shall seek, thru our Embassy, to support the activities of Filipino community organizations, we shall continue to make representations with employers, as well as with Government officials, to help protect the interests and welfare of our countrymen working here. We shall seek to actively seek to intervene towards improving working conditions and the terms of your contracts, as well as your compensation packages.

It is our commitment to identify programs and projects that will promote the well-being of our citizens overseas. You may be far from your homeland, but you remain to be Filipinos. We remain to be one and united, for this is how we will face the burdens and challenges that will confront our society in this and in the next century.

Walang tutulong sa Pilipino kundi ang kapwa Pilipino.

Maligayang Pasko at Masaganang Bagong Taon sa inyong lahat!

Mabuhay tayong lahat!

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

**Speech of President Estrada at the luncheon meeting with the Philippine-Vietnam Business Council,
December 17, 1998**

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the luncheon meeting with the Philippine-Vietnam Business Council**

[Delivered at the Hanoi Daewoo Hotel, Hanoi, Vietnam, December 17, 1998]

EXPANDING TRADE PARTNERSHIP

It is my pleasure to meet with the business community here in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. This gives me and my business delegation from the Philippines an opportunity to establish business relationships with you and discuss ways towards further strengthening Philippine-Vietnam economic relations.

This is the third country after Singapore and Malaysia that I am visiting during my presidency. I have declared it my policy that the first countries I will be visiting are the countries in Asia because they — like Vietnam are our immediate neighbors in the Community of Nations. Thus, I am happy to join you here today, during the occasion of the ASEAN Leaders Summit in Hanoi.

The Philippines and Vietnam share a regional affinity because we both belong now to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, or APEC.

In the Philippines, I had the opportunity to meet Vietnamese deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Manh Cam on July 29, 1998 in Malacañang. During our meeting, we agreed that our two countries could cooperate with each other not only at the bilateral level but also in various international fora such as ASEAN and APEC.

There are many imperatives why Vietnam and the Philippines should now work more closely together in many areas of cooperation. I am confident that our joint efforts will redound to the mutual benefit of two developing economies.

Our Vietnamese friends may wish to know how we in the Philippines are doing.

The Philippines has proven to be more resilient than some of our neighbors in the financial crisis that has shaken almost all economies in Asia. Through the policies of market liberalization, deregulation, and privatization in the last few years, we have developed sound economic policies that have helped us stand on solid footing and be competitive with the rest of the world.

Our economic indicators continue to be positive. We expect to finish the year with a positive GDP growth rate. Our currency, the peso has recently strengthened to a range of 38 to 39 pesos to one US dollar.

Our exports remain strong at double-digit growth rates due to the strong performance of key sectors such as electronics. We have succeeded in containing inflation, which is expected to remain within our projection this year.

Interest rates have steadily declined closer to the pre-crisis level. The budget deficit has gone down to a more tolerable level compared with our GNP.

Our banking system remains stable and is one of the best capitalized in the region.

Our policy orientation is pro-poor. Our policies are intended to create an environment that lead towards improving the living conditions of the poor.

But we are also pro-business. We are committed to a fair and free-market economy that is conducive to business activities and based on global realities. We are likewise committed to leveling the playing field.

Likewise, we can boast of an improved peace and order situation. We have moved decisively to calm the fears of our people about their personal safety and of companies to go about their business.

There has also been marked improvement in the overall industrial peace situation in the last few months. This has been brought about by the improved maturity of our labor and management groups. Just about two months ago, most of our major labor federations and employers' groups forged an accord that included a no-strike and no-lockout provision.

Indeed, we see better times ahead. We also see opportunities for stronger economic ties between the Philippines and the rest of the world – especially with our neighbors in ASEAN, including Vietnam.

Now you may ask, how goes Philippine-Vietnam economic relations?

Last year, Vietnam ranked as the Philippines' number 22 trading partner. Our total trade with Vietnam has expanded 7.5 times from a mere US\$ 48 million in 1993 to US\$ 358 million in 1997. In the first nine months of 1998, total trade between our two countries has already reached US\$ 377 million, surpassing the level for the whole of 1997 and elevating Vietnam as one of our leading trading partners.

Our exports to Vietnam increased from US\$ 37 million in 1993 to US\$ 130 million in 1996, although they decreased to US\$ 95 million in 1997. Our top exports to this country include various mineral or chemical fertilizers which accounted for 55 percent of our total exports; fuel oils; and pharmaceutical products.

On the other hand, our imports from Vietnam started out much smaller than our exports but they have consistently increased. From only US\$ 10.5 million in 1993, they reached US\$ 263 million in 1997. In the first nine months of 1998, they amounted to US\$ 313 million. Our top imports from Vietnam include rice, petroleum oils, crude oils, and ground nuts.

The balance of trade used to be in our favor, but shifted in Vietnam's favor in 1996 – which is understandable because our imports from Vietnam have increased faster than our exports to Vietnam.

We look to the example of our close ASEAN neighbors who have been more successful in penetrating the Vietnamese market. Surely, both sides can do something to improve our share of the Vietnam market.

In terms of investments, quite a number of Philippine companies have established operations in Vietnam. These include San Miguel Corporation with its beer and packaging operations, United Laboratories in pharmaceuticals, Columbia Motors in partnership with Vietnam Motors, Far East Bank in banking, and Arthur Andersen/SGV in management consultancy.

The Vietnamese Ambassador to the Philippines, Nguyen Thac Dinh, estimated that total Philippine investments in Vietnam have reached US\$ 290 million for 16 projects as of July 1998. This places the Philippines as number 17 among foreign country investors in Vietnam and number 4 among ASEAN country investors.

This just goes to show that many Filipino companies have seen Vietnam's potential to become one of Asia's most dynamic economies, and have been active in exploring the business opportunities it has to offer.

There are also other mechanisms that have been promoting economic linkages between the Philippines and Vietnam.

There is the Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation that facilitates negotiations for cooperative endeavors at the government-to-government level. Our two governments have, in fact, signed various bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding to promote trade and partnerships in various areas of endeavor.

We have established a representative office of our state trading company — the Philippine International Trading Corporation — in Ho Chi Minh City way back in March of 1994. The company is actively engaged in promoting countertrade and counterpurchase of various products between our two economies.

There is also the Philippine-Vietnam Trade Council, Inc. which familiarizes the Filipino business community on business opportunities here in Vietnam.

It is clear from what I have mentioned that we need to launch more joint initiatives to strengthen, expand, and upgrade our economic relations.

In trade, we need to balance the numbers. We must address the trade deficit the Philippines has been incurring.

We have identified a set of products which the Philippines can supply the Vietnamese market, including consumer products such as contract furniture and interior designs and furnishings; services, such as those related to computers and infrastructure projects; food and food preparations; construction materials especially housing components; and, industrial manufactures, such as electrical products and farm equipment.

There is no doubt that with Vietnam's continuing economic reconstruction and the liberalization of its investment climate, many Asian and Western economies are considering the potentials for doing more business with Vietnam. The Philippines is one of them.

We see potentials in the construction sector which is becoming one of Vietnam's fastest growing foreign-invested business sector. With the construction boom expected to continue past the turn of the century, we hope to attract Vietnam in building materials and construction services that the Philippines can supply. Allow me also to make a pitch for our design and supply capabilities in furniture, houseware, and accessories.

Likewise, we foresee a growing demand for skilled workers in Vietnam. Since Vietnam faces an increasing gap between supply and demand caused by shortage of adequate skilled labor, we hope to be able to fill in such a gap with the skills of Filipino manpower services.

Philippine exports have observed difficulties in penetrating the Vietnamese market. Towards addressing these difficulties, we propose the following measures:

- The Chambers of Commerce and Industry of our two countries should facilitate information exchange between them.
- More extensive seminars on how to do business in Vietnam should be held to.

I am optimistic that through the joint initiatives of our respective Governments and business sectors, we can together contribute to the deepening of our regional and bilateral economic interdependence. This will help promote peace and solidarity, economic growth and stability, and progress and prosperity in Asia and the Pacific.

Thank you very much and *Mabuhay!*

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

Christmas Message of President Estrada during the Cabinet Christmas Party

Christmas Message of His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada President of the Philippines During the Cabinet Christmas Party

[Delivered at the Heroes Hall, Malacañang Palace, December 23, 1998]

A PROMISE OF BETTER THINGS TO COME

This is the first out of the six Christmases that I will be having with you. So it is only fitting that we make it memorable and meaningful for all of us.

Sabi nga nila, kahit naman sa anong bagay, ang unang karanasan ay mahirap makalimutan. Tulad din 'yan sa pag-ibig, ang unang girlfriend o boyfriend ay matagal nating makalimutan, kahit na ilan pa ang sumunod sa kanila.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support and the hard work that you have done to ensure that my administration will achieve its mission and vision for our country and people.

I would like to especially express my gratitude to the leadership and members of the Senate and the Lower House for approving the budget in record time. This will be a very big help to my administration in ensuring the immediate implementation of our priority programs for 1999.

Jane Fonda once said, "You can run an office without a boss, but you can't run an office without secretaries." She may have referred to a different set of secretaries but her remark applies as well to the Cabinet. I could not run the presidency without you — my competent, efficient and hard-working secretaries — although I would have much preferred the kind Miss Fonda had in mind.

One thing I am sure of is that we have stayed together as one official family in the first six months of my administration. This speaks well of our unity, I would also like to think of it as wisdom on my part.

As an American novelist put it, "a person's intelligence is directly reflected by the number of conflicting views he can entertain at the same time on one topic." It has not always been easy to make up my mind after hearing your different opinions, but I believe that, so far, I have made the right decisions.

I am well aware that these past six months were particularly difficult. The currency crisis in Asia, the adverse effects of *El Niño* on our people's livelihood, the looming threat of *La Niña*, and the devastation inflicted by one super typhoon after another would have been hard enough for any new set of officials. But, together, we persevered and triumphed over these problems. As a result, despite all those obstacles, our country is still better off than some of our neighbors in the region.

I am also aware that some of you are still besieged by the problem of confirmation, but you should not worry. If you are not confirmed, I will baptize you again.

The coming year promises a new beginning for all of us. Whatever it may bring, let us take it as an opportunity to pursue with greater vigor and determination the kind of progress and improved living conditions that we desire for our country and people. In order to do so, we need to work harder still, with all our energy, creativity, and imagination.

In my recent visits to our ASEAN neighbors, I have noticed how far advanced Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are compared to us, although some of them suffered more from the Asian contagion. Even Vietnam, which used to be

full of bicycles five years ago, is now full of motorbikes. At the rate it is going, I will not be surprised if those motorbikes become cars five years from now.

I, therefore, urge all of you — as well as everyone in your departments — to work double time, even make sacrifices, if we do not want to be left behind in the race for progress and prosperity.

But since this is Christmas, let us all forget our worries and be merry in anticipation of better things to come. Then we can all frown and be tense from too much work beginning January 1.

Sa ngalan ng Unang Ginang at ng aking pamilya, hangad ko para sa inyo ang isang mapayapa at Maligayang Pasko. Nawa'y maging mas masagana at matagumpay para sa ating lahat ang bagong taong darating.

Source: **University of the Philippines Main Library**

Message of President Estrada on the 102nd Death Anniversary of Dr. Jose Rizal

[Delivered on December 30, 1998]

(Sgd.) **JOSEPH EJERCITO ESTRADA**

Source: **University of the Philippines Main Library**

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638

Speech of President Estrada during the Signing of the 1999 General Appropriations Act, December 30, 1998

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the Signing of the 1999 General Appropriations Act**

[Delivered at the Ceremonial Hall, Malacañang Palace, Manila, December 30, 1998]

FURTHER ENHANCING DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

I am happy to sign into Law Republic Act No. 8745, the General Appropriations Act for 1999, the first budget prepared under my administration. After months of intense study and deliberations, congress has given us, in record time, the authority to fully pursue our pro-poor yet market-friendly program for next year.

Considering that we submitted our budget proposal only in August, the availability today of a budget approved by congress for our signature indicates the speedy work that our colleagues in congress have made in reviewing our proposed budget so that we may have a new budget ready for execution by the first working day of 1999.

I am happy to note the close coordination made by congress with the executive branch to avoid deadlocks and facilitate budget review. We hope that this presages the kind of working relationship that we envision between our two branches of government in the crafting of important pieces of legislation and in expediting the implementation of expenditure reforms in the coming years. It also affirms a common vision of what needs to be done to pull our country early out of the Asian economic crisis.

I, therefore, wish to commend the House Committee on Appropriations, led by its dynamic chairman, Representative Gualberto Duavit, who played a pivotal role in shaping the substance of our 1999 Appropriations Authority.

I also thank the Senate Finance Committee, led by its chairman Senator John Osmeña, who displayed remarkable insights in the evaluation of the budget measure.

The early enactment into law of the 1999 budget measure is made more significant by the critical nature of the first half of the coming year. The first six months that we face will be a make-or-break period that will demand a more active government in the economy. A fiscal stimulus is necessary to enable our economy to register a real growth of 3 to 3.5 percent at the very least by the time we begin the next millennium. For this reason, we will strictly follow a disciplined and well-focused spending program. Nearly 68 percent of this budget is dedicated to key social services, the development of agriculture, and priority infrastructure for rural areas.

We were fortunate to have relatively withstood well the Asian economic crisis, compared to some of our friends in the ASEAN. With this expenditure program, we will be able to give our economy the push it needs to get out of the danger zone and set it firmly on the path of steady growth.

We are aware of the importance of releasing funds on time to expedite the delivery of essential public services. Accordingly, we are simplifying-the fund release procedures by the start of 1999.

We will use the General Appropriations Act as the expenditure authority for the regular programs and projects of government agencies. We will resort to special release orders only for special projects and lump-sum funds in the

budget. No reserves will be imposed on agency budgets. We will uphold transparency and the principle of “what-you-see-is-what-you-get.”

We will release the notice of cash allocations quarterly instead of monthly. The resulting predictability and added flexibility in the use of cash reserves should improve government operations and enable us to better keep within our fiscal program.

Our commitment to make cash available when and where these are needed applies too for government’s indebtedness to contractors and suppliers for projects completed, or for supplies, equipment and materials that have already been delivered. If we strive for efficiency in the use of public resources, then the least that government can do is to practice efficiency in its own operations.

We are aware that many of those who do business with government have been greatly discouraged by government’s notoriety for delayed payments and even non-payments for services already rendered or outputs already delivered.

We will not only eliminate such tendencies under my administration but pursue a new payment process which cuts red tape. We will pay contractors and suppliers directly through government banks. We will harness the use of improved information systems technologies and keep the public posted of such releases through the internet. Through this, we will also substantially eliminate opportunities for corruption.

Unlike in previous years when the presidential veto power was heavily applied for congressional changes in the budget measure, I am exercising such veto power sparingly and only for a direct veto of the entire appropriations under Chapter 49, Debt Service-Interest Payments, including its special provisions found on page 1189, House Bill 4240. The Supreme Court has categorically ruled in the past that the servicing of public debt, whether foreign or domestic, is automatically in accordance with existing laws. Hence, appropriation for Debt Service-Interest Payment in the General Appropriations Act is no longer necessary and, therefore, requires my veto.

The short veto is, therefore, a result of the extraordinary cooperation and close coordination between the executive branch and the legislature in the crafting of the 1999 budget.

My friends and colleagues, I ask for your support in the execution of this budget measure that I have just signed into law.

Let us observe discipline now that it is a call of our times; prudence, now that resources are increasingly getting scarce and therefore precious; and judiciousness in the use of these resources, now that our people demand and deserve the most productive and beneficial services from us, their public servants.

As I have stated in my state of the nation address, “my solutions are obvious, my proposals may be commonplace, but they were never adopted before. In sum, they are to spend wisely and less. And, by austerity and hard work, generate the means to cover the shortfalls of the past, so we can have a smooth runway for a final take-off.”

Thank you and *mabuhay!*

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

**Speech of President Estrada at the dinner with the Malacañang Press Corps, December 30, 1998 Speech
of**

**His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the Dinner with the Malacanang Press Corps**

[Delivered at the Kalayaan Hall, Malacañang, December 30, 1998]

PARTNERS IN SERVING THE PUBLIC

Taos-puso akong bumabati ng isang manigong bagong taon sa lahat ng miyembro ng Malacanang Press Corps na naririto. Nagpapasalamat din ako sa inyong pagtanggap ng aking paanyaya na dumalo dito sa ating munting salu-salo. Hindi lang munting salo salo dahil may raffle, iba na ang may pinagsaluhan.

This holiday season, I have had interactions with the people who work closely with me — the ones who really matter. *At siyempre, hindi ko palalampasin ang pagkakataong makasama ko ang mga miyembro ng Malacanang Press Corps dahil itinuturing ko kayong ka-pamilya na rin sa Office of the President.*

Nais ko ring samantalahin ang pagkakataong ito upang pasalamatang kayo sa mga suportang ibinibigay ninyo sa akin at sa ating iisang layunin na paglingkuran ang sambayanang Pilipino. So tonight, I ask you to lay down your pens, tape recorders and cameras, and just enjoy the evening.

This is also my way of celebrating my having survived the first six months in office as President — in spite of the media. From day one, people — and I don't mean just you — had been watching me and my every move, waiting for me to commit some mistakes.

In the first few months, I had some unpleasant brushes with some of you, but I consider those as the spice of life. It took a little while for me to get used to it, for in the movie industry where I came from, any kind of publicity — good or bad — is always welcome because it adds to one's popularity. But the Presidency is a completely different matter because it is a far more serious business.

Ni hindi nga ako nakaranas ng tinatawag na honeymoon with the media. Pero mabuti na lang hindi ako sanay maghoneymoon. Sa totoo lang, that was the best honeymoon I ever had. Pero tulad nga ng aking madalas sabihin, ang inilalagay ko na lang sa aking isipan ay ang natutuhan ko sa pagiging artista: ang bida ay nagpapabugbog muna sa una, pero sa huli ay siya pa rin ang panalo.

As the weeks and months rolled by, the criticisms somehow *na tempered ng konti*. I would like to attribute this change to some modest achievements. I successfully negotiated a solution to my first national crisis — the shutdown of the Philippine Airlines; delivered a well-received keynote address in my first international appearance — at an Economic Summit in Singapore; and was designated by my fellow leaders as the ASEAN Spokesman for the Poor — in the APEC meeting held in Kuala Lumpur.

By now, I hope we have all realized that media and government need not work as adversaries. We must be partners, for we serve the same public.

The Press and the State have their respective tasks to fulfill, but in the end, we all share one common goal — the enduring peace, progress and prosperity of our people and our country.

Alam ko namang ginagawa n'yo lang ang inyong trabaho. Kaya't ipagpatuloy ninyo yan, at gagawin ko rin ang akin. Ako ay may sinumpaang tungkulin na ibabangon ko ang ating mga kababayan sa kahirapan. At tungkulin naman ninyo na maghatid ng katotohanan sa ating mamamayan.

We in government regard media as our vital ally in the service of the nation. It is through you that we are able to reach out to our people. It is through you that we communicate with the citizenry. It is through you that we make known to the public the work of Government, the policies of Government, the programs of Government.

The power of media is a power that must be exercised for the good of the majority, for the attainment of national unity and not of divisiveness.

The freedom of thought and of expression not only provides the people with the opportunity to air their grievances, to criticize official wrongdoings, to offer suggestions and recommendations, but more importantly, to widen the arena of political debate.

That is why my Administration is committed to respect the freedom of the press. *Dito pa naman sa Pilipinas*, the freedom of the press works in such a way that there is not much freedom from it. That being the case, my only request is for you to report me and my policies, programs and activities correctly.

This year, I will concentrate on food security. One food for thought concentrates on agri modernization.

I appeal to all of you to help us rally our people in meeting the challenges of the times. Criticize us constructively when we falter, but support us also when we do things the right way.

I ask you to help me succeed in the fight against poverty, crime, corruption, and the other ills that beset our society. Let us help our people gain access to opportunities that will uplift their living conditions and restore their human dignity.

Having said that, let me conclude by saying that I treasure our relationship very much and cherish the good times along with the bad that came our way in 1998. All things considered, it has been an exhilarating first six months, so I look forward to a better and more harmonious relationship with you in 1999.

Happy New Year to all of you!

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

[Delivered at the Ceremonial Hall, Malacañang, January 5, 1999]

I am, therefore, gratified that, during my first six months in office, I have had important occasions to establish solid footing for working with the leaders of our country partners.

At the APEC Summit in Kuala Lumpur last November and the ASEAN Summit in Hanoi last month, I was impressed by the deep desire among leaders in the region to fully cooperate with one another. We discussed and adopted measures to effectively respond to the many challenges facing the region, particularly the economic and financial crisis.

I am particularly proud to be designated by my fellow ASEAN leaders at the APEC summit as their spokesman for the poor. This, in effect, is recognition that our concern for the poor has gained wider acceptance not only within our shores but also throughout the region.

During my visits to Singapore, Batan Island in Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand, as well as the visits here by the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam and other foreign officials, I reiterated our commitment to be a full and active collaborator of other nations. Together, we can preserve peace and stability, enhance common prosperity, and promote justice and respect for human dignity.

The Philippines successfully hosted the 31st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and the 5th ASEAN Regional Forum last July, and the 30th ASEAN Economic Ministerial Meeting last October. We are looking forward to hosting the Third ASEAN Informal Summit later this year. I am convinced that we can further contribute to the transformation of ASEAN into a more cohesive and proactive core of east Asian and Asia-Pacific cooperation.

I am also eagerly looking forward to establishing closer working and personal ties with the leaders of our other allies and partners within the next few years. I realize that, in this globalized and interdependent world, only friendship and cooperation – not enmity and confrontation – can work. We intend to expand and deepen our bilateral relations with friends in North and Latin America, the Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

Your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

1998 had been a critical year for many countries because of the economic and financial crisis in Asia. We are, however, heartened by the fact that, despite the continuing difficulties, our true friends did come forth when we needed them. Our friends made our tribulations more bearable.

This year, we expect to see much improvement not only in the overall performance of our regional economies but, more importantly, in the living conditions of our poor. With your support, we in the Philippines will do our best to make 1999 a beneficial year for the common man.

On that note, may I invite your excellencies and dear friends to join me in a toast –

To another fruitful year of international cooperation;

To closer and deeper ties between the Philippines and your respective countries;

To a happy and prosperous 1999.

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

Speech of President Estrada during the Inauguration of New Rooms and Equipment of the Philippine General Hospital and Start of a Medical Mission from New York, February 2, 1999

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the Inauguration of New Rooms and Equipment of the Philippine General Hospital
and the Start of a Medical Mission from New York**

[Delivered at the Philippine General Hospital, Taft Avenue, Manila, February 2, 1999]

A commitment to better health care services

AKO at ang Unang Ginang ay nagpapasalamat sa mainit ninyong pagtanggap sa amin. Binabati ko ang pamunuan ng Philippine General Hospital, sa pangunguna ng inyong masipag na Director, si Dr. Napoleon Apolinario, sa inyong mga proyekto para sa kalusugan, lalung-lao na ang mga mahihirap. Ako ay lubos na nagagalak sa ating pagkakaroon ng mga bagong kagamitan dito sa PGH.

*Karaniwan nang problema ng **Government Hospitals** and kakulangan ng mga silid at moderning gamit. Malaki ang naitutulong ng PGH para tugunan ang problema ng ating mga mahihirap na kababayan na hindi kayang mag-pagamot sa mga pribadong ospital. Ngayon, dahil sa mga bagong kagamitan nito, mas higit na makakatulong ang PGH sa mga mahihirap nating mga kababayan na maysakit.*

*Kabilang sa mga bagong kagamitan ng PGH ang isang munting gusaling antayan ng mga bantay ng mga pasyente. **Emergency Room Complex ng OB-Gyne Department; CT Scan** para sa madalian at wastong **diagnosis** ng mga karamdaman; **expansion ng Pharmacy; Intensive Care Unit** para sa mga biktima ng sakit sa puso; **Ecology Center and Waste Management Unit** para maiwasan ang paglaganap ng mga sakit; at ang **Botika ng Masa**.*

Nagagalak ako sapagkat sa kabila ng kagipitan at kakulangan sa pondo ng ating pamahalaan ay nagkaroon kayo ng mga proyekto at kagamitang tulad nito.

*Ako rin ay nagagalak sapagkat sa araw na ito ay sisimulan din ang libreng pag-opera sa PGH ng mga **cancer surgeons** mula sa New York. Kahit na ilang araw lamang sila dito, malaki ang kanilang maitutulong sa mga kababayan nating may kanser na kailangang operahan.*

We would like to express our gratitude to the cancer surgeons of the New York University Medical Center, headed by Dr. Steven R. Hofstetter. I am glad that in spite of your busy schedule, you have found time to visit our country, perform free surgery on indigent cancer patients, and conduct lectures about the latest techniques in cancer treatment to our general surgeons and surgical residents.

I understand that about so indigent cancer patients will benefit from this surgical mission.

Para sa ating mga Doktor, umaasa ako na madadagdagan ang inyong kaalaman para mas lalong maging mahusay ang inyong pangagamot sa ating mga pasyente na may kanser.

I have made my commitment to champion the cause of the masses. In line with this, we have formulated policies and implemented programs aimed at providing the basic needs of our people, such as food, housing and health care.

Health is one of administration's top priorities. I have always believed that "a healthy people is a productive people." That is why we have launched projects that will improve the health conditions of our people especially the poor.

Aside from "*Botika ng Masa*," which we launched nationwide last month, we have also started the mobile clinic project as part of the First Lady's "*Serbisyong Pangkalusugan at Paggamutan Para sa mga Mahihirap*."

Through the National Economic and Development Authority, I have endorsed a \$15-million loan from the Government of Spain to be used to improve the facilities in the emergency room of PGH.

Makaka-asa po kayo na kami ng Unang Ginang ay patuloy na hahanap at gagawa ng paraan para mas lalong matulungan ang mga mahihirap nating kababayan. Pero tutulungan po ninyo kami na bigyang-lunas ang marami nating problemang pangkalusugan sa pamamagitan ng paglilinis ng ating paligid at pagsugpo sa mga nagiging dahilan ng iba't-ibang sakit.

Magsama-sama po tayong lahat at magtulungan para pangalagaan ang kalusugan ng ating mga sarili at ng ating mga kababayan. Huwag na po nating hintaying may miyembro ng ating pamilya ang magka-sakit bago tayo kumilos.

Hindi rin po tayo dapat umasa sa gobyerno na gamutin ang lahat ng may karamdaman. Limitado lamang ang ating pondo at ang kakayahan ng ating mga ospital, kaya gustuhin man natin ay hindi natin mabibigyan ng tamang pansin ang lahat kung marami ang sabay-sabay na magkakasakit.

*Mabuti na lamang kung may tulad nitong misyon ng **New York University Medical Center** na laang magkaloob ng libheng tulong. Pero huwag na nating hintayin na mangailangan tayo ng kanilang tulong. And pinakamagandang magagawa natin ay alagaan ang ating mga katawan at kapaligiran para maiwasan ang pagkakatoon ng sari-saring karamdaman.*

Patuloy na tutulungan ng gobyerno ang PGH upang ito ay magsilbing magandang halimbawa ng ating kagustuhang maglingkod sa mga kapus-palad nating kababayan na nagkakasakit. At umaasa rin ako na ang mga taga-PGH at iba pang ospital at health centers sa buong bansa ay maglilingkod ng tapat sa lahat ng mamamayan, kahit na sila ay walang sapat na pambayad at lalung-lalo na sa oras ng kagipitan.

Mabuhay ang UP-PGH.

Mabuhay ang Surgical Mission ng New York University Medical Center.

Maraming salamat po.

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638

Speech of President Estrada during the Turn-over Ceremony of MRT-3 from the Metro Rail Transit Corporation to the Department of Transportation and Communications, July 20, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the Turn-over Ceremony of MRT 3 from the Metro Rail Transit Corporation
to the Department of Transportation and Communications**

[Delivered in Westin Philippine Plaza, July 20, 2000]

**TOWARDS GREATER MOBILITY
AND PROGRESS**

I am very pleased to join you in this turn-over ceremony of the Metrostar Express System or MRT-3 from its builder, the Metro Rail Transit Corporation (MRTC), to its operator, the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC).

Let me congratulate and thank these two main players that have worked through the years to make the dream of a mass rail transit system on EDSA a reality.

To the builder, the MRTC, the nation salutes you for a job well done under the most challenging conditions. The successful construction of the \$655-million Metrostar Express System, with nearly 17 kilometers of railroad tracks and 13 modern stations along Metro Manila's strategic north-south corridor, is a testament to the vision of your company and the dedication of its officers and employees. What you have accomplished will facilitate not only the mobility of our people but also the growth of our economy and the protection of our environment. You should take pride in this accomplishment for it is well-deserved.

To the operator, the DOTC, on whose shoulders now fall the great responsibility of operating and managing the MRT-3, and which has been involved with its planning and implementation from the very beginning, I offer my warm congratulations for bringing the project to completion. Achieving excellence in operating the system will be a continuing challenge for the department, which I am confident the DOTC can meet.

The EDSA MRT-3 project has been a good example of what a partnership between government and the private sector can accomplish when they work together for the good of the whole nation.

There is no denying that mass transportation is an important factor in the progress of our country. All forms of economic and social activity suffer a setback from the effects of traffic on people's ability to get around. Traffic congestion today is more than an inconvenience. It blocks our growth, decreases our productivity, and even wastes our increasingly expensive fuel resources.

The full operation of the MRT-3 will considerably lessen traffic and pollution along EDSA, which is a major highway in Metro Manila. Aside from reducing travel time, the MRT-3 will also reduce the dependence of the riding public on buses that ply the line. It is also expected to improve productivity because it will facilitate the flow of trade and commerce in the metropolitan area.

The electric-powered Metrostar Express System will certainly go a long way in providing the nearly two million daily commuters along EDSA with a safe, speedy, reliable and, most importantly, affordable alternative in getting to their destination. Its trains can handle up to 600,000 passengers daily or up to 185 million passengers annually.

Fares on this commuter railway will be among the lowest in the region. They are currently pegged from P 12 to P 20 for an end-to-end journey. But as I announced at the MRT-3 completion signing ceremony held last Saturday, for the next six months, riding the Metrostar Express shall only cost between P 9.50 and P 15.00, depending on the distance, and in celebration of the start of its full operations, the public may ride on the Metrostar Express, free of charge, starting at noon until ten in the evening today.

My administration is committed to provide our people with this type of modern mass transportation. That is why we are pursuing the development of several other urban rail transit systems to help our commuters, who must daily contend with hours-long journeys, especially during rainy weather.

Together with the existing LRT-1 along Taft Avenue, the Metrostar Express System leads the way forward to upgrading our mass transportation to modern standards. I am told that we can expect that, together, these systems can transport over a million people every day in air-conditioned comfort.

No one can underestimate the boost to productivity and the local economy that this can create. Efficient travel around a city like Manila can stimulate commerce in a powerful way since our people can have more time to devote to useful and productive undertakings.

As you all know, the ever-increasing prices of fuel, like gasoline and diesel, are putting tremendous pressure on the country. Of course, even electric-powered systems must use some fuel to generate electricity. But putting fuel in electric generators to power trains like those of the Metrostar Express is up to one hundred times more efficient, in terms of the number of people transported at a given distance, than putting fuel in cars or buses. Moreover, electric-powered trains can make full use of our abundant hydroelectric power resources, which, of course, motor vehicles cannot.

I should also point out the tremendous contribution that these mass transportation systems can make in cleaning up our environment by drastically reducing the load of air pollution created by internal combustion engines of motor vehicles. According to some international agencies, Manila has one of the world's worst problems in air quality.

This is a problem for which this project can be a major solution. You can just imagine the air pollution that is caused by moving one million people a day in cars, buses and jeepneys. All that can be cleaned up by the operation of our electric-powered mass rail systems. But the really big payoff comes in the reduction of our staggering health care costs, which steadily rise as environmental pollution afflicts our people with respiratory and skin diseases.

Again, I commend the Metro Rail Transit Corporation for what it has accomplished. I understand that over 6,000 employees and construction workers labored long and hard over the last five years in planning and building the Metrostar Express. I, therefore, wish to congratulate Chairman Robert John Sobrepena and his board of directors for leading and managing this massive effort.

I also wish to thank the foreign and local banks which provided the financial resources needed to build the Metrostar Express. Without their support, the project could not have been built.

Likewise, I extend my special gratitude to our foreign partners. Japanese contractors Sumitomo Corporation and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries built the civil works and train stations. The Czech Republic's rail builder CKD Tatra supplied the rolling stock. And U.S.-based Kaiser Engineers undertook the engineering design.

As a result, there were hundreds of Japanese, Czechs, Americans, Australians, French and other expatriates who participated in building these public transport facilities, in addition to the thousands of Filipinos employed by the dozens of Philippine companies involved.

Last but not least, we must not forget the many government officials, employees and political leaders who have, in one way or another, assisted in building the Metrostar Express.

Setting up this system in the middle of EDSA had its advantages and disadvantages. Businesses, residents and local governments had to make some adjustments to accommodate such a massive undertaking in the middle of our capital's busiest thoroughfare. The task of facilitating the solution to these problems fell on several national agencies, such as the Department of Transportation and Communications under Secretary Vicente Rivera; the Department of Public Works and Highways under Secretary Gregorio Vigilar; and the Metro Manila Development Authority under Chairman Jojo Binay, to name a few.

To all of the people who have contributed to building this monument to national progress, I wish to extend my personal thanks and congratulations for a job well done.

Thank you and Mabuhay!

Source: **University of the Philippines Diliman Library**

Speech of President Estrada during the Loan Signing Ceremony of the Asian Development Bank-assisted Pasig River Environmental Management and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program and Luncheon in Honor of Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Tadao Chino, July 21, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the Loan Signing Ceremony of the Asian Development Bank-assisted
Pasig River Environmental Management and
Rehabilitation Sector Development Program
and Luncheon in Honor of ADB President Tadao Chino**

[Delivered at the Heroes Hall, Malacañang, July 21, 2000]

A VALUABLE PARTNER FOR A WORTH CAUSE

It is with distinct pleasure that I join all of you in this loan signing ceremony of the Asian Development Bank-assisted Pasig River Environmental Management and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program.

At the outset, allow me to thank those who have worked hard to make this event possible. In particular, I would like to express my appreciation to the ADB project staff, our private sector partners, the Manila Water Company, and Maynilad Water Services Incorporated. I would also like to commend my own staff from the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC), headed by Secretary Ben Diokno, and its commissioners and member agencies, particularly Secretary Gregorio Vigilar, the National Housing Authority, and the Department of Finance.

I am sure that many more have provided valuable support, including the leadership of the Metro Manila Council headed by PRRC co-chairman Jojo Binay and Mayor Jose Capco of Pateros.

I have closely followed the development of this project. There have been major constraints and differences among the various stakeholders. Nonetheless, the fact that this event is taking place today is proof that, despite seemingly insurmountable difficulties, the cooperative spirit inspired by our common desire to save the Pasig River has prevailed. To one and all, my heartfelt thanks.

Indeed, this project is a milestone not only for my administration but also for all who share my vision to revive a dying river. The significance of the project can not be overemphasized. The current state of the river remains to be a major environmental concern. It confronts us direct in the face, so to speak, as it co-exists with us in the very urban environment where we live. And we cannot and should not allow this.

Those of us who have the power and the means to do something must carry on the work of rehabilitation of the Pasig River with greater determination and speed.

As a demonstration of political will, I have made the rehabilitation of the river as the flagship program of my presidency for the environment. As a first step, I have created the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission directly under my office to put in place an agency dedicated to the work. This was necessary in order to approach the task rehabilitation in a strategic manner and to give it more focus.

Cognizant of the existence of a number of programs in this area, I have commissioned Palafox Associates to formulate a master plan for the rehabilitation of the river. This master plan will integrate and update all pre-existing programs and incorporate my vision for the rehabilitation of the river. The Pasig River Development Plan (PRDP), which was also formulated through an ADB technical assistance, was adopted as an integral component of this master plan.

Today, having just signed the loan agreement for the first phase of the PRDP, we have ensured adequate financing for the initial implementation of the master plan. The Pasig River Environmental Management and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program, as the project is called, is quite a mouthful. Allow me, therefore, to be the first to call it by an appropriate acronym, PREMAR, for brevity.

The signing of the loan for PREMAR is surely not the beginning nor the end. Talking of beginnings, already, in an attempt to fast-track the rehabilitation work, we have started the implementation of critical components. The relocation, housing and resettlement of informal families occupying danger zones along the banks of the river have started. Contrary to some reports, the resettlement site is a far better and safer place to live in for the affected families.

The relocatees will stand to benefit from PREMAR's livelihood program with short, medium and long-term dimensions. For the short term, the families are already being provided with skills training and social credit for small business. In the medium term, training on various skills will be given to enable them to be gainfully employed. Over the long-term dimension, businessmen will be encouraged to set up operations in the vicinity of the resettlement sites, with priority employment given to the relocatees.

To fully clear the riverbanks, consultations and a land acquisition plan are underway for formal settlers along the river. The cost of this program is huge. We, therefore, challenge the Asian Development Bank to be more flexible and innovative in its financing policy by sharing the costs of the land acquisition program, as well as expropriation which will be undertaken as a last resort.

Possible linear parks and promenades along the riverbanks have already been identified out of the cleared areas. Simultaneous flood control works in the form of river and parapet walls and revetments are immediately being put in place in these areas. We will proceed with the development of the linear parks and promenades along the riverbanks as soon as the proceeds from the loan are disbursed.

In the midst of all this, let us not forget that all these are being done with the twin objectives of alleviating the plight of the poor informal families living in danger zones along the riverbanks and improving the water quality of the river.

To improve water quality, solid waste collection, monitoring and enforcement of commercial and industrial pollution controls and water quality monitoring will be intensified.

Along this line, we have started setting up an industrial database and a river modelling tool. The polluters tax principle will be fully implemented in Metropolitan Manila through the administration of an environmental users' fee in areas which are not yet covered by such a system.

We want the public to know what we are trying to accomplish to gain widespread support for this undertaking. After all, a major source of river pollution are domestic households.

Much has been said and done about the Pasig River. We look forward to this loan as a means to expand our resources and capability to undertake the noble task of the river's rehabilitation. Towards this end, we look at the Asian Development Bank as a staunch and untiring partner in this formidable task. You are truly our valuable partner for this worthy cause since we realize that we cannot do it alone.

I take this opportunity, therefore, to give honor to its president, the honorable Tadao Chino, for making all these possible and for supporting and sharing with us the common vision of rehabilitating a dying river, which is a precious and priceless heritage of the Filipino people.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us not allow the Pasig River to die instead let us continue to work together to revive and restore it so it can be conducive to transport, tourism and recreation.

Thank you and *mabuhay*!

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

**Speech of President Estrada at the Asia Society Dinner, July 28, 2000 Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the Asia Society Dinner**

[Delivered in New York, July 28, 2000]

I thank the Asia Society, its chairman, Mr. Hank Greenberg, and president, Ambassador Nick Platt, for this great opportunity and honor to meet with you.

Heads of Asian states, including my own, have come to this city and met with the good members of the Asia Society to see if they might be able to catch the attention of the financial and cultural capital of the world, even if only briefly, on behalf of their distant lands. As a Filipino, I could lay claim to an important edge over your other visitors: I represent a people whose association with you no other in the far east can easily match – a relationship that has spanned more than one hundred years and which has taken many forms.

No other country in the region has patterned so many of its democratic institutions – from its legal and political systems to its business and educational systems – so closely to yours. The Philippines has three million Filipinos living among you as fellow citizens and permanent residents. And no other ally in the region has stood by you through all the wars in the last six decades – from the Pacific War to the Korean War, from the Vietnam War to the Cold War.

But much has happened to the global community since our partnership underwent its last transition in the early 90's, when American military presence in my country ended. So, I make this visit – the first by a Philippine president in the new millennium – to enhance our century-old alliance and guide it to a new era of partnership. In this new world order, with interdependence and new security challenges intensifying, we anticipate the character of our alliance to make another transition.

As with any long-standing partnership, our alliance has been both bad times and good. One difficult phase occurred within the first year of my watch, during the deliberations over the visiting forces agreement or VFA. The VFA sought to allow U.S. military forces to conduct joint military exercises and training with our forces in Philippine territory. It also provided the legal framework for the treatment of U.S. personnel during the period of the exercises and training.

The debate was intense and the fight was no small political feat. Once the decision was made to pursue it, however, my administration stood its ground and faced the opposition head on. The VFA was ratified and Philippine-American defense cooperation has been revitalized.

Political and economic challenges such as this have marked the first two years of my term as president. The financial and economic crisis that affected our region was triggered from beyond our borders and control, yet had an inevitable impact on our economy, especially in the banking, industry and other sectors.

Other crises, such as what hit our Philippine Stock Exchange earlier this year, have had a more domestic character, surfacing from within our private and public institutions. These events cannot be excused nor brushed aside and they have served to pinpoint areas that required reform. Yet, even as they have served as a wake-up call, they also, ironically, have been the best demonstration of the basic soundness of our economic fundamentals and the resilience of our political system.

It is generally conceded that among the countries directly affected by the Asian crisis, the Philippines managed to pull itself through relatively unscathed.

In 1998, during the worst year of the crisis, the Philippines recorded a GDP contraction of only half a percent. That contraction could not even be primarily attributed to the original financial crisis but rather to the impact of adverse weather on our agriculture.

Last year, Philippine GDP grew by 3.2 percent. And for the first semester of this year, we anticipate a GDP increase of over a 4 percent.

My assertions on the resilience of the Philippine economy are not mine alone. Allow me to quote from a recent IMF study on the Philippines, entitled Philippines: Toward sustainable and rapid growth. "On balance," it says, "the Philippine economy has been able to weather the regional crisis better than most of its neighbors, reflecting more favorable starting conditions as well as the pragmatic implementation of sound macroeconomic policies."

The report attributed the creditable performance of the Philippines during and in the aftermath of the crisis to "favorable starting conditions" and sound economic policies and management.

The first refers to the fact that, compared to our neighbors, the Philippines had less time to enjoy the Asian boom — and therefore less time to overload on cheap foreign credit and its other excesses — before the crisis struck. It is the second, however, the sound economic policies and management, which is the more interesting story but which, unfortunately, is often brushed aside.

The Philippines is one of the most open economies, a result of a series of market-oriented reforms to liberalize. Deregulate and restructure the economy that our government started putting in place since 1986, and a legacy that my administration continued. These reforms and policies had the effect of making the economy more resilient to cope with the crisis when it came.

Specifically barriers to investment were removed in key industries such as power, telecommunications, banking, insurance, domestic aviation, oil and mining. Foreign exchange controls were lifted after 40 years of a regulated regime. The entry of foreign equity and investors was facilitated. Import restrictions were lifted and tariffs reduced.

Despite the many calls to resort to protectionist measures during the crisis my administration continued to uphold these policy and structural reforms. The alternative would have seen a reversal of the gains from deregulation and liberalization.

Beyond those basic macro-economic reforms I have just mentioned are other areas that have received the priority attention of my administration.

I am happy to inform you that in recent months we had several home-runs with the Philippine congress, and we anticipate more in the next few months.

Last March, I signed into law the new General Banking Act, which, among other things, enables the adoption of internationally accepted banking supervision and regulation standards. In the same month, we enacted the Retail Trade Law, which opened our retail trade to foreign companies after a century of protection.

Last June, about two weeks before the U.S. Congress was able to do the same, our congress passed a Landmark E-Commerce Act. This act provides the legal framework governing both commercial and non-commercial transactions through the internet. It provides penalties for computer crimes.

Finally, just two weeks ago, I affixed my signature to a new Securities Act which aligns the regulation of capital markets with international practices on full disclosure. The act is a milestone in our efforts to reform and deepen Philippine capital markets.

Other important pieces of legislation I am pushing include the Omnibus Tower Bill and amendments to the Omnibus Investment Incentives Act. The Power Bill, which will further deregulate and privatize the power sector, is now in the bicameral conference committee.

I am also pushing for the early enactment of an Anti-Racketeering Law with Anti-Money Laundering provisions, and a bill that seeks to further strengthen the supervision capacity of the central bank. These are for instituting greater transparency, accountability and good governance in our public and corporate sectors.

Just as important, by taking more concerted efforts to pro-fit our education system and upgrade our communications infrastructure, my administration is equipping our most important resource — our people — for the global knowledge economy.

You may have heard that your country, the United States, recently garnered the top ranking in the global new e-economy index, which maps the “technological vitality” of the world’s 47 leading economies. The Philippines did well, too, being ranked number 26 overall. Well ahead of most of our neighbors and Italy, Brazil, Mexico, China and Korea. We were adjudged the world’s number 1 in the category of knowledge jobs. That put us ahead of Australia, the US, Canada and France in terms of qualified engineers, availability of it skills, availability of senior management and higher education enrollment.

As captains of industry and pillars of American business, you will not have failed to notice that the reforms my administration is continuing and those that we have begun all take the strategic view. They are not short-term, unsustainable palliatives. Not only are they intended to address weaknesses laid bare by the crisis; they are meant to further fortify Philippine economic-foundations and brace the country for the challenges and opportunities of the new economy. We are building for the future now.

And this same orientation is what we have for the other aspects of our national life. Yes, we want long-term prosperity so we yearn and now work hard for lasting peace.

You have heard, without a doubt, about the difficulties we have recently been facing in the southern part of the country.

For so long, the peace of the nation and the authority of the state have been threatened by elements seeking to dismember our land. Like all free nations that fought long and hard for their independence, we cannot allow this sorry situation to fester.

My government’s first aim in Mindanao is to restore and maintain peace. For without peace, development will be a pipe dream. We know that poverty and the long government neglect that bred it are the roots of our present travails. But any government earnestly seeking to redress this wrong will fail if lawlessness runs rampant.

Accordingly, my government has been seeking to uphold its authority and solemn duty under the constitution to preserve the integrity of our nation. We cannot allow lawless violence and barbaric terrorism to run our country down.

The reconstruction and socio-economic development efforts in Mindanao have begun. We will not stop until we uplift the lives of all Filipinos there. We will actively talk peace and actually build it with everyone who sincerely seeks it.

When I sought and assumed the Philippine presidency two years ago, my overriding ambition was to give the best I can back to the nation that has been so good to me. That has not changed. It has only crystallized into the three-pronged goal I now wish to win for my country.

I want my people to enjoy peace, but only with freedom. I want my people to savor prosperity, but only with fairness. And I want my people to experience stability, but only with openness.

Our road to lasting peace, sustained prosperity and social stability may be long and arduous. But one thing is certain, our journey is now underway. And it will be much more difficult if we are so foolhardy as to try to do it all alone.

As my predecessors in office had done in the past, we actively seek the support and cooperation of friendly countries and partners.

In this global village, a nation's life and fate are inextricably linked with those of others. This is as true to us in East Asia as it is in Europe and to yourselves in the Americas. For interdependence, integration and cooperation are the guideposts of today and tomorrow.

East Asian integration is on the march. In the economic sphere, ours is already one of the most integrated developing regions in the world our production networks are so closely interlinked. Intra-regional trade and tourism are rising fast. Even the gyrations of our currency and equity markets are highly correlated.

Consider for instance China, a country which for so long was a world unto itself before its opening to the world in the late '70s, China's economic ties with its neighbors were small or negligible. The trade volume between China and Japan was only a little over one billion US dollars in 1972; by 1999, it was more than 66 billion US dollars.

Last year, China's two-way trade with South Korea was 25 billion U.S. Dollars, and with the major economies of Southeast Asia, nearly 27 billion U.S. dollars. Indeed, China's trade with its East Asian neighbors now exceeds that between China and America or between China and Europe.

Of course, the clearest proof yet of how closely linked East Asian economies are with one another was our common experience of three years ago. The Asian financial crisis showed that even global investors see East Asia as a unitary whole, and that, of course, was both good and bad. Bad because the fundamentals of individual economies were summarily disregarded, and good because East Asians came to realize that they must count on each other's understanding and support.

Thus, the Asians' contributions to the financial packages for South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia. Thus, China's restraint from devaluing the Yuan. Thus, the new Miyazawa initiative and the Obuchi plan. And last, the ASEAN economic and financial surveillance process.

And the spirit lives on. At the summit of ASEAN leaders with the leaders of China, Japan and Korea, which I chaired in Manila last year, we issued our first-ever joint statement on East Asian cooperation. In that document, we expressed our resolve to collaborate more closely towards regional stability, peace and prosperity.

Since that trailblazing document, economic ministers from the thirteen East Asian countries have identified nine areas for enhanced cooperation, such as information technology and e-commerce.

Our finance ministers have launched the Chiang Mai initiative, a regional network of currency swap arrangements, as an initial step to prevent recurrence of the 1997-98 financial turmoil.

At the pace East Asia is now moving, an Asian monetary fund may be just around the corner.

I believe very strongly that East Asia is taking the right path. Greater economic integration does not only provide avenues for advancing shared growth and prosperity, it also improves the likelihood of lasting peace.

Of course one will always remind us that Germany and Britain were each other's largest trading partner in the early years of the last century. But that did not stop them from waging World War I on opposite sides.

There indeed are no guarantees but, if the French and Germans could put aside centuries of war and deep antagonism, if a European Union can grow from the seeds of a steel and coal community, I see no compelling reason why, say, ASEAN plus three cannot flower into an agent of global peace and stability.

An Asian scholar recently observed that the Asian crisis has served as the most important defining event of regional security since the end of the cold war. It “revealed not only the vulnerabilities of the region to external pressures, but also the inherent weaknesses in the internal foundations of regional security.”

Indeed, terrorism, transnational crime and other scourges add new fuel to the old hurts left over from colonial past. And as we in the Philippines are so keenly aware religious extremism – not only in my country, but in many areas of the region – is again rearing its ugly head.

If allowed to deteriorate, by indifference or meager action, the small fires that have now begun burning may engulf us all. And it will be small solace to America that our region lies on the opposite side of the globe.

For our vision of one East Asia is not a monolith pitted against others. The world is too small for that.

We know and are truly thankful that the road to Asian recovery passed through Washington and New York, without America’s locomotive, the Asian train would still be stuck in the station, without America’s commitment to fairness and openness, the Asian crisis could have been a global catastrophe.

And we know, too, that for us to have peace in Asia we need America not so much because America alone has the might. But because America is peerless in championing the ideals of the peace we want – a peace with freedom.

Thank you.

Source: **University Of The Philippines Diliman Library**

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638

Speech of President Estrada upon his arrival from the Official Working Visit to the United States, August 5, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
Upon his Arrival from the Official Working Visit to the United States**

[Delivered at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Manila, August 5, 2000]

A GRAND SLAM OF A VISIT

Ako, at ang bumubuo ng aming delegasyon ay nagbabalik ngayong umaga matapos ang isang matagumpay na pagdalaw sa Estados Unidos ng Amerika. Dala namin ang mga bunga ng masigasig na pakikipag-ugnayan sa lideratong politikal at ekonomikal ng pinakamalakas at pinakamayamang bansa sa buong mundo, gayundin ang pagmamahal at pangungumusta ng ating mga kababayan sa apat na lungsod na aming pinuntahan.

Twelve days ago, I embarked on an official working visit to the United States of America on the invitation of U.S. President Bill Clinton. Our goal was to re-affirm our long-standing friendship with a country with whom the Philippines maintains one of its most dynamic and important bonds, and to prepare our two countries for a closer relationship that will address the challenges of the 21st century and the new millennium.

This visit took me to four major U.S. Cities – San Francisco, Washington, D.C., New York, and Los Angeles – where we met key government and business officials, as well as the Filipino-American communities in those places. Throughout our stay, we conveyed the message that numerous opportunities await stronger interaction and exchanges between our two countries, both on the government-to-government level and on the private sector front.

On our arrival this morning, I announce with pride that we have achieved – and have even exceeded – all the objectives we had set for ourselves on this trip. Our official working visit to the U.S. may be likened to winning a baseball game with the bases full but we made a grand slam home run.

First, President Clinton accorded me and the members of my delegation such personal attention at the white house that our meeting with him was extended by an additional hour. The president of the most powerful country in the world not only welcomed us with warmth and hospitality but virtually became my tourist guide at the White House. And he introduced to me each of the 21 Filipino staff at the White House like they were part of his family which, in turn, made me very proud.

This genial and generous reception pervaded the discussions between President Clinton and me, together with our respective delegations, that resulted in greater cooperation between the Philippines and the United States. These covered defense and security, economic and development cooperation, trade and investment, as well as other subjects.

In the political and defense/security arena, President Clinton and the leaders of the U.S. Congress reaffirmed the importance of the democratic alliance between our countries to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. We agreed to intensify defense cooperation and to build on the gains we have achieved since the ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement.

We also pledged to pursue greater cooperation to counter terrorism and narcotics trafficking through measures that will include improving the capability of our police and coast guard. Just as important, the United States pledged to provide additional defense assistance in support of our defense modernization, beginning with the provision of helicopters and a coast guard cutter vessel under a letter of offer and acceptance signed by our two governments last July 27.

The Philippines and the United States also issued a joint statement on cooperation in the environment and public health, under which the U.S. will assist the Philippines in building an institutional and technical capacity to address environmental and public health problems.

In response to my representation on behalf of our World War II veterans, President Clinton pledged to support pending bills providing for additional veterans benefits. He told me that, although the necessary legislation has not yet been passed by the U.S. Congress, he has already issued an executive order directing the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to do everything possible within the bounds of law to improve the benefits available to Filipino veterans.

And in California on the eve of my departure for home, I witnessed the ceremonial signing of Assembly Bill 1978 which gives Filipino veterans the opportunity to enjoy their full state benefits even after they have returned to the Philippines. We hope this will persuade other states to enact similar laws in favor of Filipino veterans living in other parts of the U.S.

With regard to the situation in Mindanao, the American leaders assured us of their support for our peace process. I am also pleased to announce that our efforts to achieve peace and development in southern Philippines received a big boost with the signing of a new \$20 million food aid package for Mindanao.

I could perhaps describe our days in Washington as the most meaningful official visit I ever had since I became president. Indeed, this is a significant way to start the third year of my presidency.

Second, our coast-to-coast information technology blitz proved very productive. My meetings with I.T. chief executive officers from Silicon Valley and McLean, Virginia, have resulted in the signing of several agreements that will help the Philippines realize its potentials to become the region's information technology center, as well as harness the energies of our high-level I.T. workers.

As you may know, the U.S.-based Meta Group recently ranked the Philippines number one among 47 countries in terms of knowledge jobs and workers. This received a substantial boost with the signing of the R.P.-U.S. joint statement on e-commerce, which recognized the importance of the joint promotion of electronic commerce.

I also had an extensive dialogue with Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates on the challenges of the new economy as it relates to the Philippines and how we can benefit from its potentials. Mr. Gates committed to provide, among others, 20,000 units of its software for our PC's for Public High Schools Program

Third, we succeeded in securing a financial package with the International Monetary Fund, which granted us its approval of good housekeeping for the way the Philippines has been managing its fiscal and monetary policies. At dinners hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C. and the Asia Society in New York, I assured American businessmen that the climate in the Philippines is more conducive than ever to foreign investments.

I also witnessed the signing of other government-to-government agreements that promise to further advance our economic relationships. These include the agreement on mutual assistance between R.P. and U.S. Customs Administration and the joint statement on a \$5 million grant under the Global Climate Change Program.

Fourth, this visit afforded us intimate meetings with the Filipino communities in both the east and west coasts. I am pleased to have seen for myself the unity of Filipino-Americans, as well as their achievements and influence in American politics, civil service, business, and other fields.

Sa aking pakikipag-ugnayan sa ating mga kababayan sa Amerika, napatunayan kong kahit sila ay nasa malayong lugar, ang kanilang mga puso, isipan at damdamin ay nasa Pilipinas pa rin. Kaya, hiniling ko sa kanila na manatili silang nagkakaisa at nagtutulungan para sa kapakanan ng ating mga kababayan sa Amerika at sa ating inang bayan. Sinabi ko rin na ipagpatuloy nila ang pagtataguyod sa mataas na pagtingin at pagkilala ng Amerika sa kakayahan ng Pilipino.

The many solid achievements we accomplished during our stay in the United States and the goodwill generated by our very fruitful and meaningful discussions with our American counterparts are truly important milestones in the history of Philippine-American relations.

Our alliance has never been stronger. And our future as partners never been more promising. All these, we are confident, will ultimately redound to the benefit of the Filipino masses, whose welfare has been at the heart of my presidency from the time I took my oath of office.

I am pleased to be back in our country to begin building on the foundations we have laid for stronger Philippine-American ties, and for a more peaceful and prosperous Philippines.

Ako po at ang aking mga kasama ay taos-pusong nagpapasalamat sa inyong mainit na pagsalubong sa amin. Mabuhay ang pilipinas at mabuhay tayong lahat.

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638

Speech of President Estrada during the Mandaue-Lapu-Lapu City Multi-Sectoral Rally, October 25, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the Mandaue-Lapu-Lapu City Multi-Sectoral Rally**

[Delivered in Lapu-lapu City, Cebu, October 25, 2000]

SAMA-SAMANG PAGHARAP SA MGA PAGSUBOK

Maayong buntag kaninyong tanan!

Ipinaa-abot ko ang aking taos-pusong pagbati sa lahat ng minamahal nating kababayan dito sa mga lungsod ng Mandaue at Lapu-lapu. Nais ko rin pong magpasalamat sa inyong mainit na pagsalubong sa amin ngayong umaga.

Ako po ay naparito ngayon hindi lamang upang pangunahan ang unveiling ng Marcelo Fernan Monument kundi upang personal din kayong pasalamatan sa patuloy na suportang ipinagkaloob ninyo sa akin.

This afternoon, we will dedicate a monument to the distinguished son of Cebu, the late Supreme Court Chief Justice and Senate President Marcelo Fernan. That monument, along with the Marcelo Fernan Bridge, are fitting tributes to his unparalleled achievements as a public servant, a great statesman and a beacon of democracy who always remained a picture of humility in the service of his people and his nation.

Ikinagagalak ko ring ibalita sa inyo na magpapatayo tayo ng isang Women and Children Protection Center sa Vicente Sotto Hospital at ito ay may nakalaan ng pondong walong milyong piso (P8 M). Angcenter na ito ay inaasahan nating mangangalaga sa kapakanan ng ating mga kababaihan at mga bata dito sa Cebu.

Dito ninyo makikita na pinag-iisipan ng inyong gobyerno ang lahat ng paraan upang matulungan ang mga mahihirap sa kanilang mga problema. Kaya lamang ay naa-apektuhan ang ating paghanap ng kalutasan sa mabibigat na suliranin ng ating bansa dahil sa panggugulo ng ilan nating mga kababayan.

Nitong mga nagdaang araw, tayo po ay naharap sa maraming pagsubok. Kaliwa't kanan ang mga paratang na ginawa sa akin, sampu ng aking pamilya hinggil sa isyu ng jueteng at kung anu-ano pa. Ito ay mga bintang na walang basehan at nagmula lamang sa mga pananalita ng isang taong hindi maaaring paniwalaan.

May ilang nagsasabi na ako raw ay nagbitiw na sa tungkulin. Mayroong gusto akong ma-impeach. Mayroon pang nagsasabing mag-bakasyon muna ako. Hindi pa tapos ang imbestigasyon ay hinuhusgahan na nila ako, samantalang kahit isang akusadong criminal ay binibigyan ng araw ng pagdinig sa korte. Kinondena nila ako dahil lamang sa paratang ng isang jueteng lord na inamin na ang kaniyang anak, kapatid at pinsan ay kasangkot lahat sa jueteng. Sila ang mga tunay na anak ng jueteng.

Dahil lamang sa taong ito at sa kaniyang mga paratang ay pinagre-resign na ako. Ang aking sinundang administrasyon ay mas maraming iskandalong kinasangkutan at bilyun-bilyong piso ang halaga, tulad ng Amari Scandal, Centennial Expo at Tax Scam, pero hindi nila pinag-resign ang pangulo noon.

Maliwanag na may kina-kampihan ang ilan nating mga kababayan. Kung tutuusin, yan naming mga taga-exclusive villages, mga negosyanteng taga-Makati, mga peninsulares, mga oligarchs at elitist ay ayaw talaga nila akong

maging pangulo noon pa man. Hindi nila matanggap na ang kagaya ko ay maging isang pangulo, kaya nang makakita sila ng pagkakataon ay pinipilit nila akong bumaba sa pagkapangulo. Ang iniisip lamang ng mga taong iyan ay ang kanilang negosyo, ang kanilang sariling kapakanan, at wala silang pagtingin sa inyo at sa iba pang mahihirap nating kababayan.

Kaya, doon sa mga nagsasabing magbakasyon muna ako, sila ang magbakasyon sa ating mga squatter areas at malalayong lalawigan upang makita nila ang kahirapang dinadanas ng ating mga kababayan na hindi nila pinapansin. Hindi nila ito nakikita dahil puro pulitika, puro sariling interes at mga paninira ang kanilang iniintindi, even to the extent of destroying this image of our country abroad and scaring off tourists and foreign investors from coming here.

At doon naman sa nagsasabing magbitiw na ako sa pagkapangulo, ito po ang masasabi ko. Hinding-hindi po natin gagawin iyan dahil mayroon akong sinumpaang tungkulin, lalong-lalo na sa masang Pilipino.

Kung inaakala nila na ako ay magbibitiw bilang pangulo, nagkakamali sila. Alam naman ninyo ang inyong pangulo, habang binubugbog ay lalong lumalaban, lalo na kung ang ipinagtatangol ko ay ang kapakanan ng mga mahihirap at mga naaapi.

If my opponents think that they can distract me from my efforts to uplift the quality of life of our people, they are sorely mistaken. I have always worked for the benefit of the poor and I will not back down now. It is the Filipino people who gave me the mandate to govern, and I will not abandon my commitment to them.

Ako ay naging pangulo sa tulong ng masang Pilipino, kaya naman bilang pagtanaw ng utang na loob ko sa inyo, ginagawa ko ang lahat upang tuparin ang pangakong ibabangon ko sa kahirapan ang ating mga kababayan. Sa kabila ng lahat ng mga paratang at mga bintang ng aking mga kalaban sa pulitika, hindi mabadawasan ang aking pagsisikap na maitawid ang bawa't Pilipino mula sa kahirapan.

Mayroon din tayong Saligang Batas na dapat sundin. Ang nararapat lamang ay sundin ito ng ating mga mambabatas upang magkaroon ng sapat na pagkakataon ang inyong pangulo na maituwid ang mga maling paratang sa akin.

Hinihintay ko lamang lahat ng mga akusasyon bago ko ito sagutin. Handa akong harapin ang mga naninira sa akin sa tamang panahin. Pero uulitin ko na ako, maging ang aking asawa at mga anak, ay hindi kailanman nakinabang sa jueteng. Wala akong tinanggap na kahit isang sentimo na galing sa anumang uri ng ilegal na sugal. Malinis ang aking konsensya. Wala akong itinatago sa ating mga kababayan. At naniniwala ako na, sa dakong huli, mananaig ang buong katotohanan.

Sa katunayan, noon inakusahan si First Lady at Mayor Jinggoy Estrada sa PCSO, ako mismo ang tumawag sa Senate Blue Ribbon Committee upang sila ay imbestigahan. Sa bandang huli, sila ay napatunayang walang kasalanan. All the First Lady's funds were accounted for to the last centavo. At si Mayor Estrada naman ay namahagi ng mga ambulansya. Tulad nang aking ipinag-utos sa 4th, 5th and 6th class municipalities.

Hindi ko na sana gustong patulan ang mga paratang sa akin dahil para lamang tayong bumabalik sa panahon ng kampanya. Naalala ko tuloy na malapit na naman pala ang eleksiyon, kaya't hindi nakapagtataka na marami na ang naninira sa paligid natin. Lumalabas na ang mga nangyari nitong mga nakaraan araw ay larong pulitika lamang. Ginugulo po tayo ng oposisyon para hindi ako lubusang magtagumpay.

Ako ay lubos na nalulungkot dahil sa ang jba't-ibang batikos na ito ay higit na nakakaapekto hindi lamang sa aking mga mahal sa buhay kundi maging sa paglutas ng pamahalaan ng mas mabibigat na suliranin ng bansa. Maliwanag na ang mga napipinsala sa kanilang panggugulo ay ang mahihirap nating mga kababayan.

Over the past few days, there has been a continuing disinformation campaign being fed to the domestic and international media. The net effect of these is that it undermines the confidence of investors and of the international

community on our country and our economy. It is unfortunate that this comes at a time when we need to unite to confront the difficulties imposed upon us by the dynamics of the larger global economy.

I must stress that the increases in the price of oil and the depreciation of our currency against the U.S. dollar are caused by external forces beyond our control.

Lingid sa kaalaman ng ilan sa ating mga kababayan, sa kabila ng pagtaas ng presyo ng langis sa bansa, ang presyo ng produktong petrolyo dito sa atin ay nananatiling mas mababa kumpara sa ibang mga bansa sa Asya at Europa. At sisikapin natin na ang presyo ng langis sa bansa ay mananatiling pinakamababa sa buong Asya.

Sa kabila nito, ang isyu ng pagtaas ng gasoline sa bansa ay ginagamit ring dahilan ng mga mapagsamantalang pulitiko at mga iresponsableng negosyante upang lalong masira ang ating ekonomiya.

Sinisisi rin ng oposisyon ang gobyerno sa kasalukuyang kalagayan ng palitan ng piso sa dolyar. Nais ko pong ipabatid sa inyo na ang ganitong sitwasyon ay nangyayari hindi lamang sa ating bansa, kundi maging sa mas mauunlad na bansa, gaya ng England, Australia at New Zealand. Ang ating piso ay mas nakakaangat pa rin kung ikukumpara sa antas ng pananalapi ng ibang bansa sa Asya, tulad ng Indonesia at Thailand.

But we could reduce the effects of the increases in the price of oil and the depreciation of our peso if we could only set aside political partisanship and vested interests. In other countries, the people often forget their differences in times of great stress, in times when they are confronted with problems and difficulties. I believe we must do the same now.

Alam ko po na marami pa tayong magagawa kung patuloy tayong magtutulungan. Kalimutan muna natin ang pulitika. Ang aking term of office ay sa June 2004 pa matatapos at wala akong planong palitan ito. Mas mabuti kung ang pagtutuunan natin ng pansin ay ang mga bagay na makakalutas sa mga problema ng bayan, at hindi iyong makakadagdag pa sa kaguluhan.

Kaya, ako ay muling nananawagan sa masang Pilipino, sa mga magsasaka at mangingisda, sa mga maralitang taga-lungsod, sa mga manggagawa, mga guro at mga kasama ko sa pamahalaan, higit pa nating pag-ibayuhin ang pagtutulungan at pagkakaisa para sa ikauunlad ng ating bansa.

Ngayon ay wala na tayong kalaban kundi iisa na lamang at iyan ay ang kahirapan. Ginagawa natin ang lahat para wakasan na ang kahirapan sa ating bansa, pero inaamin ko po na kahit ako ang inyong pangulo, hindi ko kayang labanan ang kahirapan nang nag-iisa. Kailangan ko ang tulong ninyo at ng buong sambayanang Pilipino.

Ang ating kinabukasan ay nakasalalay sa ating mga kamay. Ang ating tagumpay ay nasa ating pagkakaisa. Tulad ng madalas kong sabihin, walang tutulong sa Pilipino kundi ang kapwa Pilipino. At gagamitin ko ang lahat ng kapangyarihan at puwersa ng tanggapan ng pangulo para sa kapakanan ng mga mahihirap nating kababayan.

Kaya hinihiling ko na tayo ay magkaisa na at sama-sama nating labanan ang kahirapan at buuin ang isang mas matatag at mas maunlad na Pilipinas. Patunayan natin sa buong mundo na tayong mga Pilipino ay kayang bumangon sa pamamagitan ng sarili nating pagsisikap at pagtutulungan.

Marami pong salamat at mabuhay tayong lahat!

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638

Speech of President Estrada at Kidapawan, October 26, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At Kidapawan**

[Delivered in North Cotabato, October 26, 2000]

...And I am certain that again, they will fail.

Ang mga bintang sa akin nitong mga nakaraang araw ay walang basehan at nagmula lamang sa mga pananalita ng isang taong hindi mo naman maaring pagkatiwalaan. Gayon pa man, hindi pa tapos ang imbestigasyon ay hinuhusgahan na ako ng ilan nating mga kababayan samantalang alam natin da demokrasya kahit na isang akusadong kriminal ay binibigyan din ng araw ng pagdinig sa mga husgado. Kinondena nila ako dahil lamang sa paratang ng isang umaamin na jueteng lord. Inaamin din ng kanyang anak ang jueteng lord, kapatid na jueteng lord, ang pinsan niya ay jueteng lord, kaya itong lahat ay mga anak ng jueteng.

Very surprisingly, without even hearing my side, they have already condemned me, surprisingly also these people take advantage of all the crisis facing our nation without giving me due process. We have our constitution which was forged during the time of President Corazon Aquino who restored our democracy. The constitution is supposed to be bible of our government and this is sacred and should be respected by all government officials and the citizenry. They are governed by the rule of law and not of men. So I feel that I be given due process, that I be given my day in court. I respect our constitutional processes, kaya hindi ako sumasagot sa mga akusasyon sa akin ngayon. Hinihintay ko lamang lahat ng mga akusasyon matapos at sasagutin ko iyan sa tamang panahon.

If it is proven that I accepted a single centavo from illegal gambling or took it from the national coffers, I will not stay in a single minute longer in my position as your president. That is why I know this misinformation campaign being fed into the domestic and international media, consider some of this ugly of false rumors being spread around. At hindi nalalaman these people do not know that spreading all these false rumors are creating bad image on your President, that affects the image of the country here and abroad. They fed everyday, disinformation to the people. Some said, three days ago that the First Lady have died of heart attack, and yesterday, my accuser sides was allegedly kidnapped by the military pero lumabas kahapon na buhay na buhay. Sinabi nila my cabinet members ay nag-resign na. Pero walang nagre-resign kahit na isa kung hindi iginagalang ko ang kanyang opinion at hindi naman siya kasama naming sa partido.

And then, based on this report that we are also to impose martial rule or emergency rule in the country. Lahat iyan ay ipinakalat ng ating mga naninira sa inyong lingkod. Ang lahat ng ito ay para lamang guluhin ang publiko. Idagdag pa natin diyan ang paratang na ang aking administrasyon daw ay involved sa graft and corruption. That is why I challenge everyone to name contract that was faces with anomaly in my government.

As I have said, all these contracts above 50 million pesos has to be reviewed by the President Management Staff and examined by our economic team consisting of NEDA, DBM and the Department of Finance before I sign it. Ituro nyo kung mayroon kayong kontratang nakikita na pinirmahan ko na may halong anomalya. At ngayon-ngayon din marahil lahat kung sinuman ang cabinet member, kung sinuman ang responsible diyan sa kontratang iyan ay siguradong magbibitiw ng position. Puro daldal ng daldal wala naming pruweba, walang maituro na kontratang may corruption.

Yes, they are accusing me that graft and corruption is rampant in the Office of the President. Kaya doon sa nagsasabing magbitiw na ako sa pagka-pangulo, ito ang masasabi ko; hindang-hindi ko gagawin iyan, dahil ako ay may sinumpaang tungkulin lalong-lalo na sa masang Pilipino. Diyan sila nagkakamali, alam ninyo ang inyong pangulo habang binubugbog ay lalong lumalaban, lalo na kung ang aking ipagtatangol ay ang kapakanan ng mahihirap at mga naaapi.

If my opponents think that they can distract me from my efforts to uplift the quality of life of our people, they are mistaken. I have always work for the benefit of the poor and I will not back down now. It is the Filipino people who gave me that mandate to govern and I will not abandon my commitment. Ako ay naging pangulo sa tulong ng masang Pilipino kaya naman bilang pagtanaw ng utang na loob ko sa inyo, ginagawa ko ang lahat upang tuparin ang pangakong ibangon sa kahirapan ang ating mga kababayan.

I have great pride to uplift the living standards of our people, but I got so frustrated when I assumed office and found out that only the National Treasury empty but we also have some 105 billion pesos in debts to pay. Ang ibig kong sabihin, noong ako ay naupo, ako ay may nag-aapurang maibigay lahat ng pangako ko sa ating mga kababayan, nguni't pag-upong-pag-upo ko, noong nakausap ko ang ating National Treasurer, ang Department of Finance, at ang Secretary of Budget, muntik na akong mahulog sa silya ko noong sabihin nilang walang iniwan na pera ang nakaraang administrasyon at ang iniwan lamang ay puro utang na nagkakahalag ng 105 billion pesos.

So even if I wanted to immediately fulfill my promise to our people, I cannot do so. No matter how beautiful our development programs are, no matter how good our managers maybe, we cannot do anything without funds. Kaya iyan po ang magyari. Kaya pagkatapos po ng dalawang taon nakabayad na po tayo nitong 105 Billion Pesos, unti-unti na tayong nagkaka-save at unti-unti na tayong nakagagawa ng proyekto lalong-lalo na dito sa Mindanao.

We save and paid our debt until our economy was on its road to recovery and we started implementing our priorities. Iyan ang sinasabi kong lagi ang pagkain, food security, ang pabahay and housing. Our inflation rate has remain single digit in the last two years. And our GNP rose from negative to 4.6 percent last quarter. Then came all these accusations at unti-unti na naman bumabagsak ang ating ekonomiya.

In the face of all these, we continue to give highest priority to the development of Mindanao, as I have said, before I step down as President in the year 2004, we will see to it that we have transformed Mindanao from the land of promise to being the land of fulfillment. That is why I am bound to give Mindanao my fullest attention. In fact, I have called the Mindanao Coordinating Council to orchestrate the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected areas in Mindanao and eventually the entire island.

We will see to it that all socio-economic development projects here give the necessary funds and are quickly implemented. The national budget for the year 2001 fully supports this goal of ... allocated a total of 100.7 billion pesos for Mindanao.

Sa buong istorya ng ating pamahalaan and for the first time in our history, the budget for Mindanao is bigger than the budget for Luzon and the Visayas. This only proves my sincere desire and concern for the development of Mindanao. My administration has launched many projects as part of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Mindanao.

Ang katotohanan niyan, even our engineering battalion almost all of them are here in Mindanao constructing roads, bridges, and helping rehabilitate and rebuild those houses that were damaged during the conflict.

Also we have seen this morning some of the results of these efforts. For example, we have allocated as the governor said, 8 billion pesos for the implementation of various projects such as the provincial of agricultural inputs like seeds and fertilizers, the construction and the infrastructures like a water system and mini-warehouse and solar dryers, various livelihood projects and the rehabilitation of the Manarapan-Langonan Road in Carmen.

We have also allocated 100 million pesos for the rehabilitation and cementing of Libuan-Calamada-Balisihan Road. Marahil Military Engineering na naman, ang army engineering na naman ang tutulong diyan. All the projects

including the construction of the... kanina ipinakita sa inyo iyong 48 million pesos Cabacan Bridge which should connect... ito ang magkokonek sa barangay sa North Bacalan, President Roxas and Antipas Municipalities. Malaking bagay ito sa mga taong taga roon.

Doon naman sa under the “Lingap para sa Mahihirap Program” the 100 poorest of the poor families identified from the most depressed barangays of Aracan and Alyosa in Cotabato Province with recipient of one housing unit each worth ten thousand pesos for a total amount of one million pesos as part of our administration’s responds to a certain needs of those who were affected by the recent conflict. 52 Housing units were also constructed in Barangay Rajamuda in Pikit, Cotabato. Nandito and Undersecretary Perry Villareal, siya ang namamahala ng housing na iyan. Iyon report niya sa akin pagdating ko, he reported that out of 6,400 houses that were affected, 3,000 houses were already rebuild. I have also released 80 million pesos for the construction of another 3,000 housing units in 23 municipalities of Central Mindanao. And I am happy that all of these... katulad nga ng sinabi ng ating Undersecretary iyong 3,000 have already been completed.

The National Program for Unification and Development Council has developed and packaged a number of projects to help rebel returnees rejoin mainstream society and start a new role for themselves and for their families.

The Department of Agriculture headed by our Secretary Edgardo Angara has also urged and action plan for Central Mindanao to help develop Agro-Industrial ventures that will bring opportunities to our people in the affected areas.

The Department of Agriculture has also initiated various infrastructure projects like the Barucadong Small Water Impounding Project in Tigcawayan and the Lower Kusok Diversion Dam in Sultan Kudarat.

With the success of the Food Security Program and the construction of basic infrastructures here in Mindanao, we expect to be able to reduce poverty not only in the region but in the whole country. In this way, we will be able to speed up the development of Mindanao and the entire country. That is why we cannot afford to be divided especially in this age of globalization when the nature of competition has become extremely tight between nations. Kailangan nating magkaisa at magtutulongan para harapin ang hamon ng globalisasyon na makipagsabayan tayo sa ibang bansa. Kung tayo ay patuloy na mag-a-away-away at nagsisiraan, ang kalapit bansa naman natin ay nagpapalakpakan dahil ang mga dayuhang kapitalista at mga turista na dapat sana ay dito pumunta sa ating bansa ay sa kanila pumupunta. Sa halip na tayo ay magsiraan, kailanbgan mag-kaisa na tayo at magtutulongan upang mapabilis ang ating pag-unlad.

Alam ko po marami pa tayong magagawa kung tayo po ay magtutulongan. Kalimutan na po natin muna ang pulitika sapagkat ang aking term of office ay sa June 2004 pa matatapos at wala akong planong palita nito. Inuulit ko, June 2004 pa matatapos ang aking term at wala akong planong palitan ito.

And inyong lingkod po ay hindi tumitigil na humanap ng solusyon sa ating mga problema. Bale wala na sa akin ang mga paninira, pagbatikos ng aking mga kalaban dahil mas mahalaga sa akin ang magpatuloy ang pag-unlad ng ating mga kababayan lalong lalo na iyong mga kapos, iyong mga pobre at iyong mga mahihirap.

Kaya ako ay muling nananawagan sa masang Pilipino, na sa ating mga magsasaka, mga farmers, fishermen, sa ating mga urban poor, mga maralitang taga-lungsod, sa mga manggagawa, sa atin mga guro, mga mag-aaral at iyong mga kasama ko sa pamahalaan, higit pa nating pag-ibayuhin ang pagtutulongan at pagkakaisa para sa ikauunlad ng ating bansa.

Ngayon, sapagka’t katulad ng sinabi ko, hindi ko na iniintindi ang ating mga kalaban sapagka’t wala rin silang pupuntahan, kaya ngayon, wala na tayong kalaban kung hindi iisa na lamang at iyan ay kahirapan. Ginagawa natin ang lahat para maitawid ang ating mga kababayan sa kahirapan dito sa ating bansa. Pero inaamin ko sa inyo, kahit na ako ang inyong Pangulo, hindi ko kayang labanan nag-iisa ang kahirapan, kailangan ko ang tulong ninyo at ng buong sambayanang Pilipino.

Ang ating kinabukasan ay nakasalalay sa ating mga kamay. Ang sabi nga ng mga matatanda, nasa Diyos and awa, nasa tao ang gawa. Kaya ang ating tagumpay ay nasa ating pagkakaisa. Tulad ng madalas kong sabihin, walang tutulong sa Pilipino kung hindi ang kapuwa Pilipino. At gagamitin ko ang lahat ng kapangyarihan ng mga mahihirap

nating mga kababayan. Kaya hinihiling ko sa inyo, tayo ay magkaisa at sama-sama nating labanan ang kahirapan at buuin ang isang mas matatag at mas maunlad na Pilipinas. Patunayan po natin sa buong mundo na tayong mga Pilipino ay kaya nating bumangon sa pamamagitan ng sarili nating pagsisikap at pagtutulungan.

Maraming salamat po, at daghan salamat at mabuhay kayong lahat.

Source: **University of the Philippines Main Library**

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638

Speech of President Estrada during the First National Summit on Children, October 27, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the First National Summit on Children**

[Delivered at the Heroes Hall, Malacañang, October 27, 2000]

STATE OF THE FILIPINO CHILDREN REPORT 2000

Ipinaabot ko ang aking mainit at taos-pusong paghati sa inyong lahat sa okasyon ng ating pagkaka-isa upang isulong at itaguyod ang kapakanan ng ating mga kabataan. Umaasa ako na ito ay higit nating palalakasin sa kabila ng mga suliraning hinaharap natin sa kasalukuyan.

We gather today to mark the culmination of our celebration of the National Children's Month. We renew today our collective commitment of ensuring our children a better life, a safe and caring environment and a brighter future. They will inherit this nation and they deserve a society better than what we have today.

I stand before you today not only as President of the Philippines but as a father, and as father to our nation's children.

We lead today a nation of young people. It is estimated that about 43 percent of our people or 33 million Filipinos are below 15 years old. This is a population that will determine the future of our society depending on how we chart our priorities today. As the populations of developed nations grow older, ours is becoming younger. In this sector, we invest our future and must plant the seeds of a better, more progressive nation. Here lies the challenge that confronts us today.

Ten years ago, the Philippines joined the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. The Philippines was likewise a participant to the 1990 World Summit for Children, which set forth a vision of a "first call for children" and formulated global goals for children.

Without question, the Philippines is committed to work for the attainment of these goals. The government is determined to ensure the rights of Filipino children to survival, protection, development and participation.

We are thus committed to nurture, educate, defend, protect and empower every Filipino child. This is not only because it is the youth of today who will shape this country's future, but because this is well within every child's right.

We take stock today of what we have achieved in terms of the goals set in 1990. Our country has achieved modest but important strides for our children's survival, development and protection. Our agenda for our children remain to be staggering.

But we can note that a marked improvement in this general health and well-being of our children's population has been realized during the past few years.

Since 1990, more babies have lived to see their first birthday, more children under five have survived. Our infant mortality rates, as well as under five child mortality rates, have been significantly reduced to levels that exceed the targets for the year 2000.

Malnutrition incidence declined in 1996. Unfortunately, this improvement was slightly compromised in 1998 because of the Asian financial crisis and compounded by the El Niño phenomenon. Malnutrition thus remains a threat to the Filipino child's survival. But we will not rest and continue to fight this war.

We have also taken steps to guarantee and ensure the education of every child as a fundamental right.

Access to basic education has however expanded through the establishment of schools and multi-grade classes in remote areas. Enrollment in elementary schools has increased and the rate of completion of primary education has risen.

But while the country's child care and development goal has been set at 90 percent coverage of all children aged 0-6, there is still a low access to day care and pre-school programs. We must therefore work for the establishment of a day care center in every barangay to ensure access to a pre-school education among our disadvantaged children.

The importance of early childhood care and development must be emphasized perhaps, the period from birth to age six is the most critical in the child's development. What happens during these first six years affects the child's health, learning capacity and behavior.

The country's education target of 98 percent participation rate and 80 percent cohort survival rates will most probably not be achieved by the end of the decade unless we undertake innovative approaches that go beyond traditional delivery systems, to my mind, is a step in the right direction.

We must likewise exert efforts to draw into the fold of our educational system child workers, the streetchildren, the special children, the neglected or abused, the children of indigenous peoples, juvenile delinquents and those caught in armed conflict.

At the same time, we must continue to look after gifted children by to give them better opportunities to develop their skills.

It is estimated that there are 3.7 million children aged 5 trapped in the worst forms of child labor – deep sea fishing, mining, quarrying, and even prostitution, to cite a few examples.

Sixteen percent of households surveyed in 1993 have children below 12 years old who are left without adult supervision. A recent study reported at least 43,600 streetchildren in the country in 1998, the DSWD alone responded to 2,700 cases of physically abused children. NGOs have placed the number of sexually exploited or prostituted children at 60,000 to 75,000 nationwide. Many of these children suffered incest and sexual abuse before being initiated into prostitution.

In 1996, the DSWD reported 7,057 youthful criminal offenders, most of whom are boys. Moreover, there are approximately 1.5 million youth believed to be drug users. The experiences of these children throughout their encounter with the juvenile justice system indicate neglect and insensitivity to their situation by the enforcers of the system. It is part of the vision of this government to establish separate detention centers for children in conflict with the law.

Children with disabilities totaled 158,302 according to the 1995 census. In addition, one out of five children in the 0-6 age-group have some form of disability or impairment.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines estimates the number of children who have been recruited by armed groups at 13 percent of the total rebel population. Thousands more have become victims of war, displaced from their homes, deprived of basic social services and exposed to physical danger and disease.

At the U.N. Millenium Summit in New York last month, I signed an optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child, banning the involvement of children in armed conflict. I deemed it timely. Considering the current situation in Mindanao, which critically affects the children in the area, the signing is an expression of my concern.

There are also some 2.5 million children from indigenous cultural communities in the country. Their areas are often affected by armed conflict over and above the fact that they are usually neglected in the delivery of basic services, are highly vulnerable to communicable diseases and malnutrition and are discriminated against.

Girls are also often most vulnerable to child abuse.

The Philippine government recognizes these children to be in need of special protection and government response is demonstrated in the focused attention given to them under child 21. ***Ngayong araw na ito ay pinagtitibay ko ang child 21 sa pamamagitan ng isang executive order.*** Child 21 represents our dreams and visions for the future. It embodies our promise to every Filipino children that we will do our best to safeguard their rights and well-being.

It is in this spirit that this administration created the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Children's Affairs, a first in this country. This office is tasked to serve the Filipino child by acting as the link to my office. It also helps coordinate matters affecting children with all other agencies concerned, particularly those involving legislation.

But while government action is necessary, it is not sufficient. The family, school, community, civil society, local government, media and national government are key players who must commit themselves to realizing children's rights and welfare.

I urge government and the private sector to work hand in hand and invest heavily in the children of the present so that we can have productive citizens for the future. We must expand and deepen our partnerships.

At this point, let me acknowledge the support and contribution of the UNICEF in extending help to our present and future actions for children when UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy was here. We talked about the Philippines taking the lead in Southeast Asia on children's issues. I promised her that this administration is very much committed to the development, protection, survival and participation of children. This summit is in fulfillment of that promise. This summit will give children a voice. It is high time that we listen to our children, *marami tayong matututunan sa pakikinig sa mga bata.*

I also wish to congratulate the organizers of this event, chaired by our Presidential Adviser for Children's Affairs, Sec. Jamby Madrigal. I wish to thank the Department of Social Welfare and Development under Secretary Dulce Saguisag, the Council for the Welfare of Children chaired by USec. Felicidad Villareal, the National Economic Development Authority, the National Anti-poverty Commissions Children Basic Sector, the UNICEF through its country representative Dr. Terrel Hill, and all other government and non-government agencies, and especially the children, for putting up this successful summit. I urge you all to continue to work hand in hand to make our visions for our children a reality.

As president, I am personally committed to a policy of "children first." Let this summit not be an end but the beginning of our continued resolve to institute more projects and programs for the protection, well-being and development of the Filipino child.

We dream of a nation where children are nurtured and allowed to grow into adulthood in a safe, healthy and supportive environment wherein all children can develop to their full potential, protected from threats to their well-being.

We aspire for a society where a good quality basic education for all children is paramount, whose children are free to express themselves, are empowered and can participate in the decisions that affect them.

Ipinangako ko sa ating mga kabataan na lalo pa naming palalakasin ang ating mga programa para sa kabataan. Kailangang kayo ay lumaki nang tama – malulusog, mapayapa at may kakayahang mapaunlad ang inyong mga sarili at ang ating bansa.

Sa lahat ng aking mga desisyon bilang inyong pangulo, kayo palagi ang aking isasa-isip. Ang inyong kapakanan ang magsisilbing aking inspirasyon at lakas. Ano pa man ang sabihin nila, hindi ako titigil sa paglilingkod sa inyo upang ang bawat batang Pilipino ay makasiguro ng isang magandang kinabukasan.

Maraming salamat po at mabuhay ang mga bata!

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638

Speech of President Estrada during the Signing of the Coco Levy Trust Fund, November 8, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the Signing of the Coco Levy Trust Fund**

[Delivered at the Heroes Hall, Malacañang, November 8, 2000]

PAGBIBIGAY BUHAY SA INDUSTRIYA NG NIYOG

Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat nagpapasalamat ako sa inyong pagdating ngayong umaga upang saksihan ang makasaysayang pagpapatibay ng executive order na nagtatag ng *Coconut Levy Trust Fund*. Ang pondong ito ay inilalaan natin para sa kapakanan ng may mahigit na dalumpung milyon nating mga kababayan na umaasa sa industriya ng pagniniyog. Kasama na dito ang dalawa't kalahating milyong maliliit na magsasaka at manggagawa sa mga bukid.

Marahil kung natatandaan ninyo noon pong ika-siyam ng Oktubre 1998, sa unang isang daang araw ng aking pagkapangulo, ako ay nagbitiw ng mga salitang: “anuman ang mangyari, ako ay nangangako na sisiguruhin ko na ang bawat sentimo ng *Coconut Levy Trust Fund* ay babalik sa mga magsasaka.” Ang pangakong iyon ay tinutupad ko ngayong araw na ito. Ang *trust fund* na ito ay hindi bababa sa limampung bilyong piso.

Matagal ko ring nilakad ang bagay na ito na sinubukan din ng nakaraang administrasyon, pero; hindi natupad. Isang linggo matapos akong maupo bilang pangulo, ito na ang aking inasikaso. Kinausap ko sina dating Ambassador Danding Cojuangco at Mayor Ma. Clara Lobregat tungkol dito at sila naman ay napapayag ko. Kaya lamang ay nagkaroon ng problema sa nararapat na executive order at halos isang taon inabot ang pag-uusap para sa mga tamang probiso nito.

Sa buong panahong ‘yan ay ako ay isip ng isip dahil habang tumatagal ay lalo namang patuloy ang kahirapan ng ating mga magsasaka sa niyog. Sa mga hindi nakakaalam, kami may ay may niyugan din sa Laguna at ito ang ikinabuhay n gaming pamilya noong araw. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit malapit sa akin ang mga magsasaka ng niyog at naiintindihan ko ang kanilang kalagayan.

Pinagtibay ko ang executive order na ito upang ipakita at ipadama sa inyo ang pagpapahala ng ating pamahalaan sa ating industriya ng niyog. Ito ay isang industriya na nagbibigay hanap-buhay sa marami nating mga kababayan.

The coconut industry is among the major sources of income of our economy. It provides employment and livelihood opportunities for many of our people. We must protect and strengthen it.

Mahigit sa tatlong milyong ektaryang lupain ang tinataniman ng niyog at nasasakop ng industriya ito. Itinatayang ito ay tatlumpu't limang porsyento (35%) ng kabuuang sakahan ng bansa. Ang kabuhayan ng maraming magsasaka sa bansa ay matagal nang umasa sa mga produkto ng niyog, sa pagluto at sa pagtutuyo ng kopra, at paglikha ng iba't-ibang produkto mula sa iba't-ibang bahagi ng puno at bunga nito.

Hindi bababa sa animnapu't apat (64) sa kabuuang pitumpu't walong (78) probinsya sa buong kapuluan ang umaasa sa industriyang ito. Ang kabuuang kontribusyon nito sa pambansang ekonomiya ay umaabot ng pitong daang milyong dolyar (\$700 M) taun-taon.

Kaya hindi dapat maliitin ang *coconut*, at lalong hindi dapat maliitin ang mga naghahanap-buhay dito. Kilala ang Pilipinas sa buong daigdig bilang pangunahing *exporter* ng produktong kopra at langis mula sa niyog.

Ang ating bansa ang *supplier* ng mahigit sisenta porsiyento (60%) ng pangangailangan ng mundo para sa coconut oil.

Ngunit sa kabila nito, ang mga naghahanap-buhay sa ating niyugan ay patuloy na itinuturing na hindi kumikita ng sapat. Pito sa bawat sampung Pilipinong umaasa sa niyog ang tinatayang nabubuhay sa kahirapan, at kumikita lamang ng humigit-kumulang sa dalawampu't dalawang piso (P22.00) bawat araw. Ayon rin sa ating pag-aaral, masasabing mabigat ang kalagayan ng pamumuhay doon sa mga lalawigang kilala sa niyog.

Maraming dahilan sa malungkot na kahirapang dinaranas ng magniniyog. Una na rito ang kawalang ng makatotohanang programa sa pagpapaunlad ng industriya ng mga nagdaang administrasyon. Maraming proyekto sa niyugan, subalit kakaunti rito ang nagtagumpay, at lumikha ng makatotohanang programa upang itaguyod ang pribadong pamumuhunan sa industriya.

Ikalawa, maraming alitan at awayan sa malaking pondong kinolekta sa mga nagtatrabaho at umaasa sa industriya na natutulog lamang dahil sa “naiipit” ito sa maraming usapin at asunto sa korte. Kung tutuusin, sa panahon lamang na binabalangkas ng gobyerno ang bagong programa para sa industriya, ilang beses na nagtalo at nag-away ang iba’t-ibang grupo na umaasa sa niyugan. Kaya ang nangyayari, naiiwan tayo dahil awayan tayo ng awayan. Ang ibang bansa ay nakakaahon dahil sila ay nagkakaisa, katulad sa Thailand, Malaysia, Japan at iba pang karatig-bansa.

Ikatlo, ang ating mga puno ay matatanda na rin at bumaba na ang produksiyon ng mga nito. Huling-huli na rin tayo sa technology at pagpapaunlad ng mga bagong produktong pang-industriya mula sa niyog. Sa buong Pilipinas, umaasa pa rin tayo sa lumang binhi, lumang teknolohiya at lumang proseso.

Itong dapat nating harapin ngayon. *We must revive our coconut industry. We must bring it back to its rightful place as one of our top ten agricultural exports. As we all know, I have made food security as the centerpiece program of my administration. And we are lucky to have as secretary of agriculture, former Senator Edgardo Angara who was the author of the Agricultural and Fisheries Modernization Law.* At higit sa lahat, bibigyan natin ng bagong pamumuhay ang ating mga nagtatanim at naghahanap-buhay sa ating industriya.

Sa araw na ito, sinisimulan nating ibangon ang industriya ng niyog. Ibabalik natin ang lakas at sigla nito na ating napabayaan nitong mga nagdaang dekada.

Nakalulungkot lamang isipin na sa kabila ng ating mga pagsisikap upang gumanda ang ating ekonomiya, may mga ilang sektor naman ng ating lipunan na patuloy na gumagawa ng kaguluhan upang ibagsak ang ating ekonomiya at kaayusang pampulitika, makakuha lamang ng kapangyarihan.

There are forces in our society that, instead of helping us out in solving our problems, are busy with discrediting the president. It is sad that as they hit me, it is our people who suffer. It is the poor who bear the hardship at hindi iyong mga nasa Makati.

Nevertheless, I have offered to them the hand of reconciliation. I offered to them a way out which is to work together. I renew these offers to them for the good of our nation.

Nakahanda ako sa anumang impeachment process na gaganapin ng ating kongreso. Nakahanda akong humarap sa pag-uusig ng senado. Basta’t ito ay sang-ayon sa ating Saligang-Batas. At ako ay naniniwala na, sa dakong huli, mananaig ang buong katotohanan.

I will prove wrong those who have put their personal and political interests above the interests of our country in demanding my ouster and fomenting political and economic instability.

Samantala, ituloy natin ang mga gawaing pansamantalang napabayaang – at napakarami nito. Pabayaang na lamang natin na ang hustisya ay lumakad ng naaayon sa ating saligang batas.

Ang laban ngayon sa pandaigdig na ekonomiya ay bansa sa bansa. At habang tayo ay hindi nagkakasundo, ang mga dayuhan ay nagpapalakpakan dahil nababawasan ang kompetensiya.

Noong nagpunta ako sa Vietnam noong nakaraang taon, nakita ko ang kanilang pagkakaisa doon, kaya naman kahit dumanas sila ng mahigit dalawampung taon na digmaan, ay sila na ngayon ang 3rd largest rice-exporting country in the world.

Dahil hindi tayo nagkakaisa, tayo ay naiisahan. Kaya kailangang itaguyod natin ang pagkakaisang ito simula sa industriya ng niyog. Kailangang bigyan natin ng pansin ang bawat kabilang sa industriya at iba't-ibang sektor na umaasa dito.

Ang paggamit ng *Coconut Trust Fund* na ito ay nakalaan para sa industriya ng niyog. Ang pondong ito ay magmumula sa dalawanpu't pitong porsiyento (27%) ng parte sa San Miguel Corporation (SMC) na pinaglagyan ng malaking bahagi ng "*Coco Levy Funds*".

Hahawakan ang pondong ito ng isang komite na binubuo ng iba't-ibang kinatawan ng magniniyog at ng pamahalaan. *They will be responsible to me and to our farmers and the different sectors of the industry. If any of the representatives of the fund will misuse the money, we will apply the full force of the law.*

Kung may sinumang gagamit ng pondong ito ng may halong anomalya, gagamitin natin sa kanila ang buong puwersa ng ating mga batas. Walang patawad. *We will see to it that the funds will be used for the purpose we have intended them, no more, no less.*

Titiyakin ko ang integridad ng pondong ito. At titiyakin ko ring ito ay mapupunta para sa kapakanan ng mga magniniyog at manggagawa sa industriya ng niyugan!

Sa pagbuo ng *Fund for Assistance to Coconut Farmers*, tinatayang hindi bababa sa limang bilyong piso ang kita o interes mula sa *trust fund* na maaaring magamit taun-taon para sa kapakanan ng mga nasa industriya ng niyog.

Wala nang oras na dapat masayang sa pagbabangon ng industriyang ito. Ngayon na ang panahon upang kumilos tayo at higit pang magsikap at magmalasakit.

Marami na tayo ngayong kalaban sa padaigdigang industriya sa *coconut oil*. Higit na maunlad ang produksiyon ng ibang bansa, at mas mura ang kanilang produkto. Kailangan nating sumabay sa ibang bansa sa kompetisyon. Ngunit naniniwala ao na hindi pa rin kayang tumbasan ng *palm oil*, *corn oil*, o *sunflower seed oil*, ang mga natural na katangian ng langis niyog, lalo na bilang sangkap sa tsokolate at iba pang pagkain, at ng sabong panlaba.

Sa pagtatapos, nais ko kilalanin ang aking kalihim ng Departamento sa Repormang Agraryo (DAR). Sa mga opisyal ng aking gobyerno, si Secretary Boy Morales ang nagbuhos ng pinakamalaking panahon upang ating mailunsad ang programang ito.

Binabati ko rin ang ating Secretary of Agriculture Edgardo Angara at ang ating *Philippine Coconut Authority* sa pamumuno ni Administrator Ed Escueta sa kanilang pagsisikap na mapalaks ang industriya.

Asahan ninyo na hangga't ako ay pangulo, lagi kong tutulungan ang industriya ng pagniniyog, lalong-lalo na ating mga magsasaka. Ako ay naging pangulo sa suporta ng mga mahihirap, kaya gagamitin ko ang lahat ng kapangyarihan ng aking tanggapan upang mapabuti lamang ang kanilang kalagayan sa buhay.

Muli, maraming salamat sa inyong lahat. Mabuhay ang mga magbubukid sa buong bansa!

Mabuhay tayong lahat!

Source: **University of the Philippines Diliman Library**

Speech of President Estrada during the Awarding of Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Wounded Personnel, November 17, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the Awarding of AFP Wounded Personnel**

[Delivered at the AFP Medical Center Auditorium, Quezon City, November 17, 2000]

RECOGNIZING VALOR OF OUR SOLDIERS

Ako'y nagagalak na makasama kayong lahat sa pagbibigay natin ng parangal sa mga tunay na bayani ng Hukbong Sandatahan ng Pilipinas at ng sambayanang Pilipino.

Sa ngalan ng ating mga kababayan, ipinaa-abot ko ang aking mainit na pagbati sa ating magigiting na kawal na tumanggap ng mga medalya at promosyon sa araw na ito bilang pagkilala sa kanilang katapangang ipakita para kapakanan ng ating bansa.

Kayo ay itinuturing naming mga natatanging sundalo na handang magbuwis ng buhay at dumanas ng sakit at hirap, alang-alang sa ating minamahal na inang bayan.

Indeed, it is a great pride to recognize our soldiers who have fought valiantly to preserve the country's peace, democracy and constitution.

On behalf of a grateful nation, I commend you for relentlessly pursuing those who have sown and continue to sow violence born out of misguided ideology and radical extremism; as well as those who were but plain bandits and criminals.

Today, it was my privilege to have shaken the hands and exchanged warm embrace with the soldiers who were willing to give everything in order to put down rebellions and criminality in our country. I stood close to the real-life heroes responsible for protecting our country's freedom, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Because of this, I am all the more proud and confident as your president and as a Filipino.

Let me also convey to you this thought: there is probably no harder decision to make; no issue that causes more anguish and sleepless nights, no situation that calls for the uttermost wisdom and willpower from a president, than the decision to command troops into war.

Since early on in my presidency, armed challenges and terrorist attacks had been launched against the government and innocent civilians, but these were all to no avail. This is because the Armed Forces of the Philippines has remained loyal and unswerving in its duty to protect and serve our country and our people. We have decisively dealt with the MILF, took over their camps, and turned them into confused stragglers. We have chased the Abu Sayaff, rescued and freed most of the hostages, and now await the final results of our mopping-up operations. You, our soldiers, have made these victories and triumphs possible.

But allow me to say that sending men and women into the field to engage a deadly enemy brought me no great pleasure, no matter how necessary and crucial that order might have been. For I know that, with every command of the president as the commander-in-chief of the AFP, by every order that I make, lives of soldiers are at stake.

Masakit po sa aking puso bilang inyong pangulo na makita ang ating mga sundalo na sugatan at itinataya ang kanilang buhay sa panganib. Mapait din sa akin na makita ang paghihirap ng kanilang pamilya at mga mahal sa buhay.

Hindi po naging madali ang desisyong ipadala ang ating mga sundalo sa Mindanao at sa iba pang bahagi ng ating bansa kung saan sila kinakailangan. Subali't ako po bilang pangulo, gaya rin ng ating mga kawal, ay may sinumpaang tungkulin na ipagtanggol ang ating bayan at mga mamamayan.

Nakakalungkot isipin lamang na habang kayo ay nagtataya ng buhay upang pangalagaan ang ating kalayaan at Saligang-Batas, tulad sa Mindanao, may mga ilang sektor namang ng ating lipunan na patuloy na gumagawa ng kaguluhan upang ibagsak ang ating ekonomiya at sistemang pulitikal.

The Mindanao situation, which has involved many of you, has affected our country because it threatened our national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as embarrassed our government and tarnished our image abroad. This should have been a time for all of us to unite. In other countries, in times of great stress and when they are confronted with difficult problems, they set aside their differences and work together to protect the interests of the state. We should have done the same in our country.

Instead, there are forces in our society that are out to discredit my moral credibility to lead this nation. By their politically motivated attacks and baseless accusations, they are once more destroying our image abroad and scaring away the tourists and foreign investors from coming to the Philippines.

Nagsimula ang lahat ng ito sa bintang na nagmula sa isang taong hindi maaaring paniwalaan. Gayunpaman, hindi pa tapos ang imbestigasyon ay hinusgahan na ako ng ilan nating mga kababayan. Hindi man lamang nila ako binigyan ng pagkakataong makapag-paliwanang, gayong kahit isang akusadong criminal ay binibigyan ng araw ng pagdinig sa husgado.

Inuulit ko po: wala akong tinanggap na kahit isang sentimo na galing sa anumang uri ng illegal na sugal. Malinis ang aking konsensiya. Wala akong itinatago sa ating mga kababayan.

Ako ay nakahanda sa impeachment process na gaganapin ng ating kongreso. Nakahanda akong humarap sa pag-uusig ng senado, basta't ito ay sang-ayon sa ating saligang-batas. At ako ay naniniwala na, sa dakong huli, mananaig ang buong katotohanan.

Hindi natin puwedeng bale-walain ang mga layunin ng ating Saligang Batas.

It is the constitution which was meant to be the guiding spirit for our democracy. It is the same constitution that calls on you, our soldiers, to risk life and limbs in order to maintain peace and order throughout the land.

As mandated in Section 3, Article 2, of that Constitution, the Armed Forces of the Philippines is the protector of the people and the state, and its goal is to secure our national sovereignty and territorial integrity. This means fighting all forces which seek to overthrow the government, impair the independence of the nation, or dismember any portion of its territory.

It is a role that you and I, as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, have sworn to perform to the best of our abilities. It is a role that we are expected to fulfill in order that the rest of the citizenry may lead their lives safely and securely.

The constitution compels us to lay our lives on the line as a matter of duty. It is the same constitution that I now invoke to allow me to enjoy the right to disprove accusations of financial wrongdoings.

I had been elected as president until the year 2004 and I have sworn to fulfill this mandate given by our people. If my detractors think that they can distract me from my efforts to uplift the quality of life of the masses, they are making a big mistake. I have always worked for the benefit of the poor, and I will not back down now. It is the Filipino masses who gave me the mandate to govern, and I will never abandon them.

At this point, let me re-assure our gallant men and women in uniform that your president will support you in every way possible.

To insure that you will continue to extend valuable services to our country and people, we have constantly pushed for the immediate implementation of the AFP Modernization Law. We are trying our best to upgrade your equipment and facilities in order to improve your capabilities.

We are also doing our best to provide you and your families with more benefits. Since I assumed the presidency, this now includes increased food allowance, free housing, scholarship grants to soldiers and their dependents, and improved health care services.

As had been done before, aside from other forms of assistance, our soldiers with major injuries shall automatically receive P50,000, while those with minor injuries shall receive P20,000 – all of these from the president's social fund. I am also allotting a special fund for the improvement of the facilities of the AFP Medical Center so that it will be able to provide better services to our soldiers and their families. A few weeks from now, we will inaugurate and begin operations at the Don Emilio Ejercito Diagnostic Center to augment our existing medical facilities.

I am certain that no amount of money can ever repay your heroic deeds in the fields of Mindanao and other sites of battle, but these benefits may suffice for now. I know that other and greater rewards await you sooner or later.

It is my wish that you recover at once for the sake of your families, for the sake of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and for the sake of our country. We still need all of you. That is why we pray for your speedy recovery so you may resume normal and productive lives.

Let me also extend my heartfelt appreciation to the officers and staff, the civilian personnel and the many benefactors of the AFP Medical Center for their tireless service, concern and substantial aid to our wounded soldiers and their dependents. I know that you shall continue giving your best for the welfare of our wounded personnel not only because they deserve it, but, most especially, because these soldiers have made our lives more safe and secure.

Muli akong nagpapasalamat sa inyong lahat sa pagkakataong ito upang makapiling ang ating mga magiging na sundalo at mabigyan sila ng parangal, ayon sa tradisyon ng ating hukbong sandatahan.

Nawa'y magsilbi silang inspirasyon sa ating lahat upang mabuhay ng may dakilang layunin. Kahit ano pa man ang ating katungkulan o kalagayan sa buhay, ang bawa't isa sa atin ay may responsibilidad na itaguyod at ipagtanggol ang ating bayan.

Kaya, itigil na natin ang ating pag-aaway-away at pagsisiraan. Sa halip ay magkaisa at magtulungan tayo upang mapabilis ang ating pag-unlad.

Magkaisa na tayo at magsama-sama para labanan ang kahirapan sa ating bansa at buuin ang isang mas matatag at mas maunlad na Pilipinas. Patunayan natin sa buong mundo na tayong mga Pilipino ay kayang bumangon sa sarili nating pagsisikap at pagtutulongan.

Maraming salamat po at mabuhay tayong lahat!

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638

Speech of President Estrada on the Occasion of his Departure for the 4th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Informal Summit, November 23, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
On the Occasion of his Departure for the 4th ASEAN Informal Summit**

[Delivered at the NAIA Centennial Terminal, November 23, 2000]

AFFIRMING OUR ROLE IN THE ASIAN REGION

Mga minamahal kong mga kababayan:

Ako po ay paalis patungong Singapore upang makilahok sa gaganaping ika-apat na ASEAN Informal Summit simula bukas hanggang makalawa ng linggong ito.

Ito ay isang magandang pagkakataon para sa atin upang makipag-ugnayang muli sa ating mga ka-alyansa dito sa Asya. Sa mga pagpupulong na ito ay aming tatalakayin ang ilang mahahalagang paksa na may kaugnayan sa pangalahatang kaunlaran at kapayapaan ng ating rehiyon.

Noong nakaraang taon, ang ating bansa ang siyang punong-abala sa ikatlong ASEAN Informal Summit, kung saan nakilahok din ang mga bansang China, Japan at Republic of Korea.

It was a successful meeting that resulted in the acceleration to the year 2010 of the realization of zero tariffs, the enhancement of the public-private sector partnership in information technology and electronic commerce, the establishment of the ASEAN Troika to address regional problems, and — with the encouraging support of our three Northeast Asian partners — the birth of a stronger East Asia community through a new regional cooperation framework.

Under Singapore's chairmanship this year, ASEAN leaders will seek to build on their achievements in Manila. I expect a lively and frank exchange of opinions on political, economic and development issues.

First, we will consider how best to maintain the economic competitiveness of ASEAN member countries amidst the challenge of globalization, and explore potentials for the further deepening of regional economic integration.

Two agreements will be signed during the Singapore Summit. First will be the protocol regarding the implementation of the Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT) scheme temporal exclusion list which lays down a mechanism for relief for member countries facing real difficulties in relation to certain manufactured products under the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). Repeatedly mistaken as a step backward for the AFTA process, this mechanism is actually an indication of the maturity that has been achieved in the regional integration process.

The other agreement that will be signed on this occasion is the E-ASEAN Framework Agreement. Developed with the help of the E-ASEAN Task Force, the e-agreement will require member countries to develop a regional information infrastructure, cultivate an environment conducive to electronic commerce, pave the way for the free flow of I.T. goods, services and investments within the region, address social concerns related to the digital divide,

and promote e-governance. I will articulate the need for member countries to narrow — and eventually bridge — the digital divide with the active partnership of the private sector.

Second, to highlight the need for stronger political cohesion in ASEAN, I will call on my fellow ASEAN leaders to be proactive in addressing concerns of a regional nature vis-a-vis the observance of ASEAN principles and existing regional mechanisms. Much of the action required to correct the misperception of ASEAN as a sunset organization lies within the realm of innovation and openness in addressing regional issues among ourselves.

Third, we will confront the region's pressing social challenges like HIV/AIDS, poverty, illicit drugs, and trafficking in women and children. I will support the proposal to convene a high-level discussion among ASEAN leaders on the topic of HIV/AIDS in Brunei Darussalam next year. I will also call for more effective regional measures and institutions to deal with poverty alleviation, and combating transnational crimes.

As with the last three summits, the event in Singapore will include the ASEAN+3 Summit and the individual summit meetings with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Last year, the Philippines spearheaded the initiative to advance broader cooperation between ASEAN and China, Japan and the Republic of Korea through the adoption of the joint statement on East Asia cooperation. It is very encouraging that there have been positive developments in the implementation of the joint statement in the past year, especially through the efforts of the economic ministers, the finance ministers and the foreign ministers. Other sectors are set to follow in their footsteps. I will, thus, stress the need for the 13 partner countries to ensure more concrete results in their political interaction as a clear step towards building one East Asian community.

There are also opportunities to meet with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea individually to exchange views on their engagement in regional development, global economic dynamism, and the maintenance of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Ladies and gentlemen:

ASEAN summitry has contributed to deeper amity among the ASEAN leaders and with their northeast Asian counterparts, and helped strengthen their resolve in addressing regional problems and ensuring economic vitality in this part of the world.

Ang ating pakikilahok sa Singapore summit ay isa ring paraan para patunayan sa ating mga kasamahan sa Asya at sa ibang rehiyon na kabila ng ilang suliraning pulitikal na ating kinakaharap ngayon, "it is business as usual" dito sa ating bansa. Ito ay dahil sa ating lubos na paniniwala at pagsunod sa mga prosesong pang-demokrasya, lalo na sa paglutas ng mga suliraning pambayan.

I would like to assure you, my countrymen, that appropriate measures have been put in place to ensure that the government will continue to discharge its functions during my absence.

I am confident that this trip will yield productive results for the Philippines and affirm its role in the region.

Maraming salamat po at mabuhay tayong lahat!

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

Speech of President Estrada at the Ceremonial Signing of the Cityhood of Bayawan, Balanga and Valencia, Early Childhood Care and Development Act and the Modernization of the Professional Regulation Commission, December 8, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the Ceremonial Signing of the Cityhood of Bayawan, Balanga and Valencia, Early Childhood Care and
Development Act and the Modernization of the Professional Regulation Commission**

[Delivered at the Ceremonial Hall, Malacañang, December 8, 2000]

**OWARDS THE GREATER DEVELOPMENT OF
THE PHILIPPINES AND THE FILIPINO**

Isang malugod na pagbati at pasasalamat ang ipinaa-abot ko sa lahat ng nariritong dumalo sa mahalagang okasyong ito, lalong-lalo na sa mga magiging na miyembro ng ating Kongreso dahil sa pagpasa nila sa mga batas na aking nilagdaan sa araw na ito.

It is the most auspicious that we should hold this Bill-Signing Ceremonies the day after the start of the impeachment trial now going in the Senate. More than anything else, this event signifies the continuing good working relationship between the Legislative and the Executive Branches of our Government. It is a clear signal to all our citizens and to the rest of the world that is “Business as Usual” in the Philippines. This is how it should be because we should not allow the deep divisions among our people brought about by recent political controversies to get in the way of our desire to improve the quality of life of the Filipino Masses.

The bills, which we have signed into law today, are necessary vehicles towards that goal since they aim to develop and modernize our communities nationwide and our human resources, from childhood to being professionals.

Three of our five new laws convert municipalities into cities. These new cities indicate not only the progress these towns have made but also a future increase in the delivery of services to their constituents since they are bound to become more progressive centers of commerce, trade and industry in their respective provinces. This further shows that we are achieving rapid urbanization nationwide since these three new cities are located in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

The remaining two new laws concern the development of the individual – from the care of the child to his becoming a professional in later life. This manifests the range of attention that we give the Filipino in order that he may be a productive member of our society and an important contributor to building our nation.

Truly, the road to national level development consists of improving our nation’s structures and institutions. We must strengthen the capability of our local government units to deliver basic services.

Just as we assist our human resources to realize their full potential. In this way, they can develop to the fullest and eventually become effective partners of government in the attainment of our national goals.

The three new laws on cityhood are: Republic Act No. 8983, creating the City of Bayawan in Negros Oriental, Republic Act No. 8984, creating the City of Balanga in Bataan; and Republic Act No. 8985, creating the City of Valencia in Bukidnon.

The transformation of these three towns into cities reflects the tremendous progress that they have achieved through the years. I, therefore, extend my congratulations to their local officials and citizenry for this milestone event. I would also like to commend the principal authors of these new law: Congressman Herminio Teves, Senate President

Aquilino Pimentel and Senator Sergio Osmeña III for the City of Bayawan; Congressman Enrique Garcia Jr. and Senate President Pimentel for the City of Balanga, and Congressman Reginaldo Tilanducia, Senate President Pimentel, Senator Franklin Drilon, and senator Sergio Osmeña III for the City of Valencia.

The conversion of these towns to component cities means an increase in their annual internal revenue allotment. With this, I expect that the local officials concerned will use the powers of their New City Charters to intensify the development of their communities.

The essence of cityhood is not just the tearing down of old signs and the printing of new stationery. It also means creating more job opportunities for their people and enhancing the delivery of basic services since they can now formulate better development plans and programs from their greater share of resources.

These new cities will also maintain the balance in development between our metropolitan areas and the countryside. As it is, we now have a total of 91 cities nationwide. Seven of these were created under my administration, namely, the cities of San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan; Masbate; Maasin, Southern Leyte; Bislig, Surigao del Sur; Digos, Davao del Sur; Koronadal, South Cotabato; and Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat. Three other new cities – the Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija; Sorsogon; and Talisay, Cebu – are still to conduct their plebiscites on cityhood.

Republic Act No. 8980, otherwise known as Early Childhood Care and Development Act, mandates the establishment of Day Care Centers and the mechanisms that ensure the total development of children by defining the structures by which these mechanisms will work, from the national to the barangay level.

The first six years of a child are a critical, formative years. These early childhood years are crucial for human growth and development because this is the period when children develop faster. This new law works for the family's and society's advantage by ensuring that the needs of children at this critical stage are adequately met.

The Early Childhood Care and Development Act also mandates investments in health, nutrition and early education which would reduce infant and child mortality rates, incidence of malnutrition and other health-related problems, and school dropout rate. In this way, the new laws programs would result in sustained long term benefits to the economy and to our society.

Indeed, this Act affirms the commitment of the 41st congress to promote and protect the well-being of the Filipino family and its members. Thus, I would like to commend the legislators behind its passage: Senators Juan Flavies, Sergio Osmeña III, Anna Dominique Coseteng and Loren Legarda-Leviste on the part of the Senate; and twenty congressmen on the part of the House of Representatives.

Republic Act No. 8981, on the other hand, provides for the Modernization of the Professional Regulation Commission, which was created 27 years ago pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 223.

The signing of this bill into law intends to respond to the needs of our work force at present.

There are 1.8 million Filipino professionals whom we consider as our Elite Corps of highly skilled manpower. They are the reservoir of our technologies, knowledge and expertise. Their services are vital and strategic to our country's development.

Today, these professionals are clamoring for a fighting chance in facing the rigors of globalization in the New Millennium. They are in need of help to effectively compete in a liberalized global market of services as mandated by the General Agreement on Trade in Services and the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services.

We, in government can do no less to help them. We must put in place the "safety nets" that would not only ensure their survival but also protect their position in the global market. We need to upgrade their knowledge and skills to assure a high level of professional competence.

We cannot promote and protect the Filipino professionals on antiquated structures, technologies, and systems. We, therefore, have to modernize the agency responsible for their regulation and supervision – the Professional Regulation Commission.

This new law responds to that need as it provides for a comprehensive modernization of the organization in charge of Philippine Professional Regulation. I, therefore, wish to commend the sponsors of this act, led by Senators Franklin Drilon and Anna Dominique Coseteng, on the part of the Senate; and Congressmen Harlin Abayon, Herminio Teves and Manuel Roxas II, on the part of the House of Representatives.

As we can see, the Members of Congress who are behind these new laws represent the whole range of our political spectrum. This goes to show that, despite our differences in these troubled times, we can count on our distinguished legislators to help build our nation because this is the only way all of us can fulfill our sworn duty to our people.

As I once again extend our thanks to all members of congress for their dedication and hard work, as manifested in the new laws we signed today, I look forward to seeing you again for many more bill signing ceremonies that will realize our dream of a better life for the Filipino people.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay tayong lahat!

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

Speech of President Estrada at the inauguration of the Office of the Press Secretary Briefing Room and Working Area of the Malacañang Press Corps, December 8, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
Inauguration of the Office of the Press Secretary Briefing Room and Working Area of the Malacañang Press Corps**

[Delivered at the Kalayaan Hall, Malacañang, December 8, 2000]

MEDIA'S SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN FOSTERING THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I would like to extend my warmest greetings to the men and women of the Office of the Press Secretary and the members of the Malacañang Press Corps as we inaugurate today the newly renovated OPS Briefing Room and Press Working Area.

I understand that, although the Presidential Press Office has been housed here since 1986, it is only now under the stewardship of Press Secretary Ricardo “Dong” Puno, Jr., that the briefing room and the press working area have been duly renovated.

With these improvements, maybe you will be inclined now to write more favorable stories about the Office of the President. By this, I simply mean your giving equal importance to the success stories of our many development programs and giving them prominence in your newspapers or broadcasts.

Alam ko naman na, magkaiba man ang ating pamamaraan ng pagtulong sa ating mga kababayan, iisa ang ating layunin para sa kanila. Kaya sana ay suportahan ninyo ang lahat ng ginagawa ng ating pamahalaan para tulungan ang mga mamamayan, lalo na ang mga mahihirap, na magkaroon ng mapayapa at masaganang pamumuhay.

I cannot possible overstate the media's important role as a catalyst for national development. Your role is very significant because you have the power to mold public opinion and influence the perceptions of the general public. But then again, in order for you to be a stimulus for development, you must fulfill the responsibility attached with the power commanded by your profession.

If our country is to move decisively forward, it will be largely because of your role and your willingness to help in the development of our country and to uphold the tenets of a democratic society.

We need a media that will mount a vigorous defense of the truth, using all available means of obtaining facts without violating the laws. We need a media that will continue the path of objectivity, seeking support and demanding to be heard so that they can hold my administration for the commitment we were sworn to fulfill.

In the past, I have been assailed by certain sectors as repressing members of the media. I have been wrongly perceived by some as an enemy of press freedom. Of course, up to this time, no member of the media has ever been arrested in the exercise of his duty or responsibility.

On the contrary, the heightened political exercises that have occupied the headlines for the past weeks only goes to show that our democracy remains very much alive and secure. I have often allowed myself to be “ambushed” by the press during presidential engagements, and I have been most tolerant of their queries, no matter how personal they could sometimes get.

Hence, I am sure that the members of the Malacañang Press Corps can attest to the fact that press freedom is very much alive and protected in our country today. The freedoms of the press and of expression are well guaranteed in this country and will always be so.

Although some of you can be very critical at times, I am nevertheless gratified by the fact that the Philippine press remains the envy of many other countries in Asia because of its independence and openness. The courage and the commitment to responsive and professional journalism, coupled with the passion for quality and excellence, have put you in the best position to face the challenges we now face as a nation.

This blessing and inauguration symbolize my administration's fresh efforts to institutionalize our people's constitutional right to know the truth about our country's state of affairs.

We must emphasize to our people that their welfare has always been the central concern of my administration. It is our hope that everything that we are striving for – economic stability, industrial growth, increased production, improved services, peace and order – will ultimately lead to the betterment of the lives of the Filipino people, especially the poor.

The success of our development plans and programs, however, depends in large measure on the support of the media, and how effectively communication efforts are able to draw support from as many people as possible. We need a strong communication support to create in people. The knowledge to identify their needs and options, the eagerness and ability to act and take up the challenge of self-development in their own hands.

I believe that the media, by the nature of your profession, touch our lives at diverse levels, illuminate the social fabric of the nation, and provide the essential link in our political, economic and cultural life. Such roles invest you with a certain kind of power over society, but in enjoying such a privilege, you are also called upon to exercise responsibility, ethical and moral leadership in your day-to-day work.

In closing, let me remind you that, at no time in our history has the Filipino press greater opportunity than today to contribute meaningfully to the development and progress of our country. I appeal to all of you, therefore, to help us rally our people in meeting the challenges of the times through a collective and unified response. May your community serve as an effective instrument in disseminating valuable information to our people to keep them up-to-date with issues of utmost importance in order that they can actively participate and contribute their share in building our nation.

Maraming salamat at maligayang pasko sa inyong lahat.

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

Speech of President Estrada at the Awarding Ceremonies for Sentrong Sigla, December 9, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the Awarding Ceremonies for Sentrong Sigla**

[Delivered at Oasis Country Resort Hotel, San Fernando, La Union, December 9, 2000]

HEALTH AS A PRIORITY IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Naimbag nga aldaw cada cayo amin. Magandang araw po sa inyong lahat.

Isa pong mainit at taos-pusong pagbati ang aking ipinaaabot sa lahat ng mga nariritong dumalo sa ginanap nating Awarding Ceremonies ng Sentrong Sigla Movement. Isang tanging pagbati ang ipinaaabot ko sa lahat ng tumanggap ng “Sentrong Sigla Awards” sa araw na ito.

I salute the *Sentrong Sigla* awardees who today join the growing list of health facilities that are recognized by the Department of Health for their excellence in service and outstanding performance in the provision of quality health care.

The awardees received cash incentives which will be used to help improve facilities and services for the provision of comprehensive health care for the family, including the reproductive health and family planning.

The awards consist of P1 million each for the Outstanding Rural Health Units, P5 million each for the Outstanding District Hospitals, and P3 million each for the Outstanding Provincial Hospitals. I was told that this year, the Department of Health has set aside P70 million for Outstanding Health Facilities under local government units.

These are not prizes for winners in a competition, because *Sentrong Sigla* is not a contest. Rather, *Sentrong Sigla* is a movement that seeks to provide financial support to outstanding local governments for performance to encourage them to improve the quality of their health services.

The *Sentrong Sigla Movement* is the first of its kind since the devolution of health services under the Local Government Code.

Under the previous administration, there was much hesitation about devolution, although the leadership then espoused support for decentralization, the financial support from the Department of Health for local government units was not there. Oftentimes, this lack of political will resulted in confusion and a deterioration in health care services that had been transferred to the LGU'S

Much has changed since then. Today, local government units have become active stakeholders in health and the *Sentrong Sigla Movement* shows that, given the proper motivation, our local government executives can manage health care systems and our government facilities can match or even surpass quality standards of private health facilities.

The *Sentrong Sigla Movement*, which started slowly and quietly in 1999, has gained momentum as a local government campaign for quality improvement. And I predict that, after all is said and done, this will be one of the success stories of my Administration, which by the way, ends in the year 2004.

I would like to acknowledge the strong leadership shown by our Secretary of Health, Dr. Alberto Romualdez Jr., in putting in place a broad framework for improving the access of the poor to quality health care services through the health sector reform agenda. It is this framework that has made the *Sentrong Sigla Movement* possible. I would also

like to acknowledge Undersecretary Susan Pineda Mercado and the *Sentrong Sigla* Team that has been implementing the quality improvement program of the department of health.

There are many people who have worked with the Department of Health to help make the *Sentrong Sigla Movement* success. But I like to make special mention of our partners, the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and the United States Agency for International Development, or USAID.

Our Health Sector Reform Agenda is and will be the only solution to bridging the equity gap between the rich and the poor in health care services. It seeks to erase the notion that there can be two systems of health care – one for the rich and one for the poor – where the rich can choose quality care and the poor must settle for whatever government can provide. Through the health sector reform agenda which includes two major programs, quality improvement and universal health insurance coverage, the rich and the poor should have equal access to quality health care.

In the two-and-a-half years that I have been President, we have pursued reforms, through the Department of Health, that are necessary to improve the health of our people, especially the poor.

We have cleaned up the procurement system for drugs and medicines, which was once perceived to be one of the most graft-ridden systems in the government.

We have taken on the battle for cheaper prices of drugs and medicines through parallel importation. This has brought our DOH officials in direct confrontation with multinational drug companies which have taken them to court.

We have instituted reforms in the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, which has become more efficient. Last June, we launched the health passport program, which complements *Sentrong Sigla* by ensuring that Filipinos, especially the poor, will have social health insurance.

Sa pamamagitan ng Programang Health Passport, makakatanggap na ang mga mahihirap ng de-kalidad na serbisyong pangkalusugan dahil maaari na silang pumunta sa anumang ospital o health center, gobyerno man o pribado, at may tutulong na sa kanilang bayaran ang gastos sa serbisyong kanilang matatanggap.

We have pursued the family planning program despite pressure from the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, only last Monday, the Philippines received the much coveted global media award for family planning, besting 21 other countries. This award was given by the world-renowned population institute, which is based in Washington, D.C.

And for all these accomplishments, I am surprised to hear some quarters of our society say that this government has not done anything for the poor.

Kaya nga po ako ay nagtataka sa mga nagsasabing walang nagagawa ang aking administrasyon para sa mahihirap. Sa kabila ng ating mga pagsisikap na mapabuti ang kalagayan ng ating mga mamamayan at ng bansa, may ilang sektor ng ating lipunan na wala nang ginawa kundi ang bumatikos at sirain ang magaganda nating mga nasimulan na.

Hindi pa umaabot sa kalahat ang aking term of office ay maroon nang mga gusto akong magbitiw sa tungkulin at agawin ang kapangyarihan ng aking tanggapan ngayon pa lamang. Kung ang kanilang panahon, lakas, isip at salapi ay ginagamit lamang nila upang maging mas mabilis ang pag-unlad ng ating bayan, makakatulong pa sana sila upang maging mas mabuti ang kalagayan sa buhay ng ating mga mamamayan lalung-lalo na ang mga kapuspalad at mahihirap.

As to the ongoing impeachment trial, I am confident that the truth will prevail in the end. I am convinced that I will be cleared of all issues that are unfairly being leveled against me. In the final analysis, those who have put their personal and political interests above the interests of our country will be proven wrong. This will restore the political

and economic stability that my opponents wish to deny our country in the pursuit of their selfish desire to seize power way before my term ends in June 2004.

Inuulit ko po sa harap ninyo na wala akong tinanggap na kahit isang sentimo na galing sa anumang uri ng ilegal na sugal. Malinis ang aking konsensya. Wala akong itinatago sa ating mga kababayan. At ako'y naniniwala na, sa dakong huli, mananaig ang buong katotohanan.

Let me assure you, therefore, that these issues will never hamper me from performing my job as the president who was duly elected by a big majority of our people. Our constitution mandates that I perform the duties of the chief executive until the year 2004, and I have no intention of defying that mandate. I promised a much better life to our people – especially the poor – and I intend to keep that promise during the term that is mandated by our Constitution.

I know we still have many things to do especially in the health sector, from the quality improvement of individual health facilities. Next year, we will go full blast in implementing the Health Passport Program. In this, we will need the partnership of our local government officials to achieve universal health insurance coverage among their constituents.

We also have to further improve and devolve the health care system and expand health care financing so that more people can afford health care.

To those who say that we have done nothing for the poor, maybe they think that the only way to help the poor is to give them dole-outs, welfare and charity. What we are saying through the health sector reform agenda and through the *Sentrong Sigla Movement*, in particular, is that the plight of the poor will not be improved by welfare alone. Reforms are needed in the government if we want to improve the delivery of services.

Reforms, however, cannot happen overnight. But if we are determined and if we are willing to work hard to undertake reforms, we can have the government that we want and the government that our people deserve.

I am proud that our Department of Health has instituted many reforms in our health system and has not stopped working for the poor. As proven by the recent global media award that our country received, the Department of Health is now recognized internationally, but many of our critics still refuse to acknowledge the progress we have made in many areas, including health.

But we are not in government to seek the recognition of our critics who never supported us in the first place. In spite of all the noise, protests and rallies that they make, we will just continue to do our work. In the end, we will prevail, and history will prove us right, that will be the greatest reward we can receive for all of our hard work and the best legacy we can leave to our people – that of having championed their cause and their well-being.

Thank you and a Merry Christmas to all of you.

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

Speech of President Estrada at the Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran Awarding Ceremonies, December 12, 2000
Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran Awarding Ceremonies

[Delivered at the Ceremonial Hall, Malacañan, December 12, 2000]

RECOGNIZING OUR CLEAN AND GREEN COMMUNITIES

Isa pong mainit at taos-pusong pagbati ang aking ipinaa-abot sa lahat ng dumalo sa mahalagang okasyong ito, lalung-lalo na sa mga pinuno ng the cleanest and greenest local government units na binigyan natin ng parangal sa haponng ito.

Today's event marks the heightened recognition of our local governments as partners of the national government in the promotion of the growth and the welfare of our nation. Selected local government units were conferred this afternoon the much-coveted *Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran* for their outstanding achievements in the promotion of clean and green communities.

Modernization and change have brought about some adverse effects to our environment, and preserving a well-balanced environment is becoming a seemingly impossible task. But the excellent performance that our local government units have shown toward preserving and improving the environment tends to disprove this view. And today's occasion proves that we can indeed take care of our environment if we put together the best of our time and efforts for this purpose.

In our sincere desire to attain a cleaner and greener environment, I issued Executive Order No. 113 on June 18 last year, establishing the *Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran* Award System.

This program is part of my administration's overall efforts to create greater awareness and understanding of effective environmental management in support of the sustainable development agenda of the government. Its primary aim is to generate multi-sectoral advocacy and recognition of the need to nurture our environment, since we are but its trustees for the generations still to come.

This simply means that if we are to pursue sustainable development, we have to preserve and conserve our environment so that our children and our children's children will have their share of the bounties of nature.

For the present generation, I have always believed that healthy environment helps ensure a healthy citizenry, and a healthy citizenry is one indicator of the country's socio-economic growth. Our people will not fully enjoy the fruits of our development if our surroundings are not conducive to their health.

Let us remember that a polluted environment worsens our health problems, which largely affect the country's poor. This is why my administration has consistently pursued pro-environmental policies and programs and has continuously encouraged all sectors of society to play vital roles in keeping our environment a healthy and pleasant place to live in. In effect, this is another way by which we are working to improve the lives of our people, especially the poor and disadvantaged.

That is why I am surprised to hear some quarters of our society say that this government has not done anything for the poor.

Only last Saturday, I personally handed out the *Sentrong Sigla* Awards in La Union to local government health facilities that have shown outstanding performance in the provision of quality health care. *Sentrong Sigla* is part of

our health sector reform agenda that seeks to erase the notion that there can be two systems of health care – one for the rich and one for the poor.

Last June, we launched the health passport program, which complements *Sentrong Sigla* by ensuring that Filipinos, especially the poor, will have social health insurance. *Sa pamamagitan ng programang ito, makakatanggap na ang mga mahihirap ng dekalidad na serbisyong pangkalusugan dahil maaari na silang pumunta sa anumang ospital o health center, gobyerno man o pribado, at may tutulong na upang magbayad ng kanilang magagastos.*

Kaya nga po ako ay nagtataka na may mga nagsasabing walang nagagawa ang aking administrasyon para sa mahihirap. Sa kabila ng ating mga pagsisikap na mapabuti ang kalagayan ng ating mga mamamayan at ng ating bansa, may ilang sektor naman ng ating lipunan na wala nang ginawa kundi ang bumatikos at sirain ang magaganda nating nasimulan.

Hindi pa umaabot sa kalahati ang aking term of office ay mayroon nang mga gusto akong magbitiw sa tungkulin at agawin ang kapangyarihan ng aking tanggapan ngayon pa lamang. Kung ang kanilang panahon, lakas at isip at salapi ay ginagamit lamang nila upang mas maging mabilis ang pag-unlad ng ating bayan, makakatulong pa sana sila upang maging mas mabuti ang kalagayan sa buhay ng ating mga mamamayan, lalong-lalo na ang mga kapuspalad at mahihirap.

As to the ongoing impeachment trial, I am confident that the truth will prevail in the end. I am convinced that I will be cleared of all issues that are unfairly being leveled against me. In the final analysis, those who have put their personal and political interests above the interests of our country will be proven wrong. This will restore the political and economic stability that my opponents wish to deny our country in the pursuit of their selfish desire to seize power way before my term ends in June 2004.

Inuulit ko po sa harap ninyo na wala akong tinanggap na kahit isang sentimo na galing sa anumang uri ng ilegal na sugal. Malinis ang aking konsensya. Wala akong itinatago sa ating mga kababayan. At ako'y naniniwala na, sa dakong huli, mananaig ang buong katotohanan.

Let me assure you, therefore, that these issues will never hamper me from performing my job as the president who was duly elected by a big majority of our people. Our constitution mandates that I perform the duties of the chief executive until the year 2004, and I have no intention of defying that mandate. I promised a much better life to our people – especially the poor – and I intend to keep that promise during the term that is mandated by our constitution.

But I must admit that I cannot do all of these without your help. That is why I urge all sectors of our society and all our communities to be involved in the cleaning and greening of our environment, not just to win in this contest but as a way of life.

Let me congratulate the 93 finalists and the seven (7) National Awardees of this *Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran* for a job well done in keeping their communities a better place to live in.

Let us give another round of applause to our national awardees in the seven categories, as follows:

Province	–	Negros	Occidental;
Highly Urbanized City	–	Bacolod	City;
Component City	–	Laoag	City;
1st-3rd Class Municipality	–	Calinog,	Iloilo;
4th-6th Class Municipality	–	Solsona, Ilocos	Norte;
Inland Bodies of Water, River	–	Matutinao River, Baidan,	Cebu; and
Inland Bodies of Water, Lake	–	Barracuda Lake, Coron, Palawan.	

Allow me to also congratulate all those who have dedicated their time and efforts to make this contest and awarding ceremonies a tremendous success.

To those local government units that did not make it this year, I challenge you to be more resolute in giving highest priority to the preservation of a healthy environment. I would like to mention in particular the local government units in Metro Manila, except Makati and Malabon which were selected finalists this year. I urge you to work harder with the national government in order to collectively mobilize and utilize our resources to attain our common goal of making metro manila the proud capital and crowning glory of our country.

There is still much to be done, and I hope that your accomplishments will continue to remind you and our other local government units of what all of you can do for your nation and the well-being of our people.

As we face the challenges of the new century, let us be more vigorous than ever in pursuing our desire to create a better Philippines. Let us not lose the momentum we have gained in spite of the political crisis we are facing today.

I urge all of you to participate in our efforts to improve our economy and move our country forward. Everything is possible if we are united in purpose and spirit to promote the growth and welfare of our nation. Let us work together and achieve the peace and prosperity that our country and people rightfully deserve.

Maraming salamat po at Maligayang Pasko sa inyong lahat!

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

Speech of President Estrada at the Awarding Ceremonies for the Best CIDSS Municipalities, December 13, 2000

**Speech
of**

**His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the Awarding Ceremonies for the Best CIDSS Municipalities**

[Delivered at Heroes Hall, Malacañang Palace, December 13, 2000]

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Isang mainit at taos-pusong pagbati ang aking ipina-aabot sa lahat ng nariritong dumalo sa mahalagang okasyong ito, lalong-lalo na sa mga pinuno ng labing-anim na bayang ating binigyan ng parangal bilang Best Comprehensive Integrated Delivery of Social Services or CIDSS Municipalities.

Ako ay nagagalak na makasama kayong lahat dahil kayo ang mga tunay kong kabalikat sa pag-ahon ng ating mga kababayan mula sa kahirapan. Kayo ang mga kasama kong naniniwala sa paalala ng ating Poong Maykapal na “anuman ang ginawa mo para sa pinakamaliit mong kapatid, ‘yon ay ginawa mo para sa akin.” You are my partners in heeding the words of God, which says that “what you do to the least of my brethren, you also do unto me.”

Moreover, I am no stranger to the struggles and opportunities that local chief executives face each day because I was once Municipal Mayor of San Juan in Metro Manila for seventeen years. My experiences during those years opened my eyes to such difficulties and challenges. Hence, I fully share your dream of achieving a better quality of life for your constituents. As the father of our nation, I have the same dream for the Filipino masses, and it is a dream that I will fulfil before my term ends, which by the way is in June 2004.

I, therefore, commend all the awardees for your exceptional performance as partners of the national government in promoting the growth and the welfare of this nation and our people. Rest assured that my administration, through the CIDSS, will continue to support the social and economic development of your respective municipalities.

Sa kabila ng mga ingay at pagbatikos sa akin, ako ay patuloy na kumikilos at gumagawa ng paraan para makaahon sa kahirapan ang marami nating kababayan. Pero tao lamang ako, kaya aaminin ko na sumasama din ang loob ko paminsan-minsan dahil naapektuhan ang aking pamilya sa mga paratang laban sa akin.

We can be accused of many lies and we can bear them in silence but we will never tolerate being accused of exploiting the poor or ignoring their plight. We will never agree to what some quarters of our society say that this government has not done anything for the poor.

Mas marami sa ating pamahalaan ang hindi ninyo naririnig sa lansangan, pero patuloy sila sa pagtulong sa kanilang kapwa nang tahimik. Pinakamagandang halimbawa nito ang ating mga social workers, sa pangunguna ng ating masipag na DSWD Secretary Dulce Saguisag.

I know the tremendous pressure being exerted on Secretary Saguisag and our social workers. But, in spite of what they hear or read, they continue attending to the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged.

Kaya’t napag-isipan kong tama lang na ginawa nating lead convenor ng National Anti-Poverty Commission si Secretary Saguisag. Sa tulong ng ating mga social workers, tiyak na mabibigyan nila ng pansin ang mga gawaing mag-aahon sa mga kapus-palad mula sa kahirapan. Matibay ang aking pagtitiwala sa kakayahan niya at ng kanyang mga kasama sa dswd. Sila ang ating mga secret weaponspara magtagumpay ang mga programa at proyekto ng NAPC.

They are the kind of public servants that any president can be proud of, and the CIDSS record speaks for their total commitment to their work.

In terms of municipalities covered, my administration has implemented CIDSS in 789 municipalities in just two years, compared to the 294 served by the previous administration in four years.

Of the 5th and 6th class municipalities in the country, only one – Kalayaan in Palawan, which is part of the disputed Spratly group of islands – remains CIDSS-less. That means 959 municipalities in the category covered from 1994 to the year 2000. The program is now penetrating the 3rd and 4th class municipalities progressively. As of today, we have served 124 towns in that classification.

For the same period of 1994 to 2000, CIDSS went to more than 3,200 barangays. Some 100 urban poor communities are also now benefiting from the program. More importantly, CIDSS has established and activated more than 18,000 people's organizations nationwide.

The program has so far spent p1.8 billion, or about P3,100 average cost per family. This merely proves that it does not really take much money to enable the poor to help themselves.

From a low about p55 million in 1994, CIDSS obtained p500 million in 1999 and another p500 million this year. For 2001, the proposed budget for CIDSS is p781 million. As you can see, the marked increase in the budgetary allocation for the program under my administration is very obvious.

As to financial investments for CIDSS, we should also be thankful to the private sector, particularly the non-governmental organizations that contributed about p15 million for its projects as of 1998.

This goes to show that the government and the private sector can, indeed, combine their efforts to hasten the poverty alleviation in our country. That is why I ask our other countrymen, especially the rich, to hear the pleas of the poor. Their outcry for help should be more compelling than mouthing of slogans in the streets.

The secret behind the success of the CIDSS is plain and simple. We have committed ourselves to the program. *Tinututukan natin, wika nga, ang programang ito.*

We have protected its budget and resources. *Tinitiyak nating hindi nababawasan ang salaping kailangan ng programa.* We have insured that its projects do not become the usual dole-outs that never succeeded afterwards.

Ang higit na mas mahalaga, ang mga tao mismo ang nagpapasiya kung ano ang mga negosyong popondohan ng CIDSS at palalaguin sa kanilang mga bayan.

Ang mga pamilyang binibigyan ng pondo ng CIDSS ay hindi kontrolado ninuman sa kanilang lugar. Walang sinumang pulitiko ang nakikialam sa kagustuhan ng mga mahihirap at sa pagpapatakbo ng kanilang mga negosyo sa ilalim ng CIDSS.

This is precisely what I want: for the poor to empower themselves, for the poor to liberate themselves from the oppressions of poverty.

Nakakalungkot lamang isipin na habang tayo ay abala sa pagpapatupad ng mga programang mag-aahon sa ating mga kababayan mula sa kahirapan, may ilang sektor naman ng ating lipunan na patuloy na gumagawa ng kaguluhan upang ibagsak ang ating ekonomiya at sistemang pulitikal.

Hindi pa umaabot sa kalahati ang aking term of office ay mayroon nang mga gusto akong magbitiw sa tungkulin at agawin ang kapangyarihan ng aking tanggapan ngayon pa lamang. Kung ang kanilang panahon, lakas, isip at salapi ay ginagamit lamang nila upang maging mabilis ang pag-unlad ng ating bayan, makakatulong pa sana sila

upang maging mas mabuti ang kalagayan sa buhay ng ating mga mamamayan, lalung-lalo na ang mga kapus-palad at mahihirap.

Ako ay naging pangulo upang maglingkod sa lahat ng ating mga kababayan. Kaya, hindi ko kailanman tatalikuran ang pangakong binitiwang ko sa masang Pilipino na ibabangon ko sila sa kahirapan. Ibibigay ko ang aking buong lakas at kakayahan gayundin ang lahat ng kapangyarihan ng tanggapan ng pangulo, upang mas maging maayos ang pamumuhay ng lahat ng ating mga kababayan. At gagawin ko ito hanggang sa matapos ang aking panunungkulan bilang pangulo sa taong 2004.

Gayunpaman, tinanggap ko ang kasalukuyang impeachment trial at handa akong harapin ang magiging resulta nito, basta't ito ay sang-ayon sa ating saligang-batas. Pero inuulit ko po dito na wala akong tinanggap na kahit isang sentimo na galing sa anumang uri ng ilegal na sugal. Malinis ang aking konsensiya. Wala akong itinatago sa ating mga kababayan. At ako'y naniniwala na, sa dakong huli, mananaig ang buong katotohanan.

I am confident that the truth will prevail in the end. I am convinced that I will be cleared of all issues that are unfairly being leveled against me. In the final analysis, those who have put their personal and political interests above the interests of their country will be proven wrong. This will restore the political and economic stability that my opponents wish to deny our country in the pursuit of their selfish desire to seize power away before my term ends in 2004.

Kaya, ako ay nananawagan sa mga gumagawa ng kaguluhan ngayon na mas mabuti pa kung ang pagtutuunan natin ng pansin ay ang mga bagay na makakalutas sa mga problema ng ating bansa. Pakinggan natin ang tinig ng sambayanan at hindi ang ingay ng iilan lamang.

Hindi sapat ang mga sigaw at talumpati para mai-ahon ang ating mga kababayan mula sa kahirapan. Ang kailangan natin sa ngayon ay gumawa at kumilos para sa maralitang Pilipino.

Kailangan nating magkaisa at magtulungan para harapin ang hamon ng globalisasyon na makipagsabayan sa ibang bansa. Kung tayo ay patuloy na nag-aaway-away at nagsisiraan, ang mga kalapit-bansa naman natin ay nagpapalakpakan dahil ang dayuhang kapital at mga turista na dapat sa atin pumapasok ay sa kanila pumupunta. Kailangang magkaisa at magtulungan tayo upang mapabilis ang ating pag-unlad.

Naalala ko pa na nang nagpunta ako sa Vietnam para sa isang state visit noong nakaraang taon, nakita ko ang kanilang pagkakaisa doon, kaya naman kahit dumanas sila ng mahigit dalawampung taon ng digmaan, sila na ngayon ay 3rd largest rice-exporting country in the world, samantalang tayo ay nag-i-import pa rin ng bigas hanggang ngayon.

Kaya, hinihiling ko sa ating mga kababayan na tigilan na ang pagsisiraan at awayan. Sa halip ay tayo ay magsama-sama at magtulungan para sa ikabubuti ng lahat ng mga mamamayan, lalung-lalo na ang mahihirap.

Ngayon ay wala na tayong kalaban kundi iisa na lamang at iyan ay ang kahirapan. Ginagawa natin ang lahat para wakasan na ang kahirapan sa ating bansa, pero inaamin ko na, kahit ako ang inyong pangulo, hindi ko kayang labanan ang kahirapan nang nag-iisa. Kailangan ko ang tulong ninyo at ng buong sambayanang Pilipino.

Sa halip na tayo'y mag-aaway-away at magsiraan, magkaisa na po tayo at magtulungan upang labanan ang kahirapan at buuin ang isang mas matatag at mas maunlad na Pilipinas. Patunayan natin sa buong mundo na tayong mga Pilipino ay kayang bumangon sa pamamagitan ng sarili nating pagsisikap at pagtutulungan.

Maraming salamat po at Maligayang Pasko sa inyong lahat.

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

**Speech of President Estrada during the Awarding Ceremony of the Outstanding Policemen of the Philippines
2000, December 13, 2000**

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the Awarding Ceremony of the Outstanding Policemen of the Philippines 2000**

[Delivered at Ceremonial Hall, Malacañang, December 13, 2000]

RECOGNIZING OUR OUTSTANDING MEN IN UNIFORM

Ipinaa-abot ko ang aking taos-pusong pagbati sa lahat ng nariritong dumalo sa mahalagang okasyong ito. Isang tanging pagbati ang ipinaa-abot ko sa mga alagad ng batas na binigyan natin ng parangal sa araw na ito, sampu ng kanilang pamilya at mga kamag-anak na kasama ngayon.

There is a popular foreign saying which goes, “if you wish to know what a man is, place him in authority.” Our policemen, with the full force of the law behind them, are given this special authority by the state to maintain peace and order in our country. The kind of men and women we want to see in our police force is embodied in these outstanding policemen whom we are honoring this afternoon.

For the record, let us once more acknowledge the Outstanding Policemen of the Philippines 2000.

For the National Capital Region – SPO4 Vicente Belaro and SPO4 Francisco Huesca;

From Luzon – SPO4 Venancio Maling and SPO1 Bobby Madamba;

From the Visayas – SPO4 Maria Cecilia Detablan and SPO3 Perfecto Codinera; and,

From Mindanao – SPO3 Rudy Abdulla Yusop and SPO4 Chito de Aro

The ninth awardee is the only commissioned officer in the group, Police Chief Inspector Ligaya Sim-Cabal. She has already won this award previously in 1997 and is the only person from the police force to have won the TOYM Award for Government Service in 1999.

Our people look up to all of you with pride, and your fellow police officers regard you as role models. I hope that after this ceremony, you will continue to shine even so you can help erase the tarnished image of our police force.

Ang okasyong ito ay isang magandang pagkakataon upang higit na maintindihan ng ating mga alagad ng batas kung bakit hangad nating mapabuti ang serbisyo ng ating Philippine National Police o PNP.

When I assumed the presidency in 1998, I was very much aware of my promise during the campaign that I would restore peace and order in the country. Today, I am happy to note that the situation has improved and urban crime has gone down considerably.

Nabawasan na ang kriminalidad sa Metro Manila kung saan dati-rati ay halos lingo-linggo ay wala na tayong nababasa sa mga pahayagan kundi mga kidnapping, carnapping, at bank robberies. Naging matagumpay rint ayo para matigil na ang kaguluhan sa Mindanao na kagagawan ng MILF at Abu Sayyaf. At alam nating lahat na katulong ng ating sandatahang lakas ang kapulisan sa ginawa nating operasyon laban sa bandidong grupo sa Sulu para iligtas ang kanilang mga hostages.

But we still have a long way to go before I can say I have truly fulfilled my campaign promise. Much work still remains to be done.

Kailangan po nating magkaisa at magtulungan para makamtan ang hangad nating kapayapaan at katahimikan. Ito ay hindi lamang para sa akin, hindi lamang para kay DILG Secretary Alfredo Lim at kay General Panfilo Lacson, kung hindi para sa ating mga mamamayan at sa ating bansa.

Tulad ng madalas kong sabihin, ako ay naniniwala na hindi lubusang uunlad ang ating bansa kung wala tayong katahimikan at kapayapaan. Kung wala tayong kapayapaan, mahihirapan tayong ipatupad ang mga programang magbabangon sa ating mga kababayan mula sa kahirapan.

Unless peace reigns in our land, we can never create a climate that is conducive to business and economic growth. *Sa ganitong paraan lamang natin maaalis ang pangamba ng mga negosyanteng ayaw maglagay ng kapital sa ating bansa hanggang may mga kidnapping, holdapan at patayan na nangyayari sa ating paligid.*

I was told that our Philippine National Police Force currently consists of 110,000 enlisted commissioned and non-commissioned officers all over the country. Out of this number, 85 percent should be out in the streets to protect our citizenry. Ito po ay kailangan na kailangan sapagka't ang unang dapat nating gawin ay maibalik ang pagtitiwala ng sambayanan sa ating mga alagad na batas. At mabilis natin itong magagawa kung laging nakikita ng mga mamamayan ang mga pulis saan man sila magpunta.

Natatandaan ko pa, na noong ako'y bata pa, kapag sinabing nandiyan na ang pulis, lahat ng respeto at paggalang ay ibinibigay sa kanya dahil pakiramdam ng mga tao ay ligtas sila sa anumang pangamba. Nguni't ngayon, kapal sinabing nandiyan na ang pulis, may mga tao na nagkakaroon ng takot, kung hindi man tumatabi at hindi malaman kung saan pupunta. Ito ay sa dahilang may mga pulis na madalas nasasangkot sa holdapan, kidnapping at iba pang klase ng krimen, at iyan ay hindi natin dapat payagang muling mangyari pa.

It is bad enough that some people are into crimes, but it is much worse when a policeman himself commits the crime.

The problem of peace and order has long affected the lives of our people. That is why I had made a commitment to run after misguided police elements, criminals and members of syndicates, and put them in jail where they rightly belong. I will continue to exert every effort in making the lives of our people more peaceful and more meaningful, just as I have promised to improve the lives of all Filipinos, especially of the poor.

Kaya nga po ako ay nagtataka na may nagsasabing walang nagagawa ang aking administrasyon para sa ating mga mamamayan, lalo na ang mga mahihirap. Sa kabila ng ating mga pagsisikap na mapabuti ang kalagayan ng ating mga mamamayan at ang ating bansa, may ilang sektor naman ng ating lipunan na wala nang ginawa kundi ang bumatikos at sirain ang magaganda nating nasimulan.

Hindi pa umaabot sa kalahati ang aking term of office ay mayroon nang mga gusto akong magbitiw sa tungkulin at agawin ang kapangyarihan ng aking tanggapan ngayon pa lamang. Kung ang kanilang panahon, lakas at isip at salapi ay ginagamit lamang nila upang maging mas mabilis ang pag-unlad ng ating bayan, makakatulong pa sana sila upang maging mas mabuti ang kalagayan sa buhay ng ating mga mamamayan, lalong-lalo na ang mga kapus-palad at mahirap.

As to the ongoing impeachment trial, I am confident that the truth will prevail in the end. I am convinced that I will be cleared of all issues that are unfairly being leveled against me. In the final analysis, those who have put their personal and political interests above the interests of our country will be proven wrong. This will restore the political and economic stability that my opponents wish to deny our country in the pursuit of their selfish desire to seize power way before my term ends in June 2004.

Inuulit ko po sa harap ninyo na wala akong tinanggap na kahit isang sentimo na galing sa anumang uri ng ilegal na sugal. Malinis ang aking konsensiya. Wala akong itinatago sa ating mga kababayan. At ako'y naniniwala na, sa dakong huli, mananaig ang buong katotohanan.

Let me assure you, therefore, that these issues will never hamper me from performing my job as the president who was duly elected by a big majority of our people. Our constitution mandates that I perform the duties of the chief executive until the year 2004, and I have no intention of defying that mandate. I promised a much better life to our people—especially the poor—and I intend to keep that promise during the term that is mandated by our constitution.

But I must admit that I cannot do all of these without your help. That is why I urge all sectors of our society to contribute their share in making our communities—and our country—a better place to live in.

It is people like these awardees whom we are honoring this afternoon who will make the government's peace and order program succeed. By your admirable examples of gallantry and devotion to duty, your noble deeds have already inspired countless young police officers to emulate your character and dedication to your profession. I commend all of you for this noble achievement. I believe that this is a great honor not just for you and your family but also for the PNP and the nation as a whole.

I would also like to commend the efforts of the private sector, most especially the Philippine Jaycees and the Metrobank Foundation, for recognizing the achievements of today's most outstanding policemen. I sincerely thank the Philippine Jaycees for honoring our outstanding policemen every year for the past years.

As long as I remain your president, I will wholeheartedly support your quest to recognize more of our outstanding law enforcers. I am also challenging the Philippine National Police and the Department of the Interior and Local Government to be involved and actively participate in ensuring the integrity of the search.

Amidst all these, I am very much aware that the attainment of genuine peace and order situation is a two-way process. Government cannot do it alone. We need the cooperation of everyone—the public in general—to make sure that our policemen do a good job in helping all of us sleep better at night.

Towards this end, I appeal to all of our countrymen to find ways to improve ourselves, rather than find fault with each other. Let us seek to correct, rather than condemn, our policemen. Let us not blame our police officers for everything. Instead, let us ask ourselves whether we have done our part in making our communities a better place to live in.

Freedom in a democracy may give rise to many voices, but they need not be discordant. The right to criticize is sacred, but truth and facts are paramount. Our policemen may not be perfect, but without your invaluable assistance, anarchy is certainly a worse option.

As ordinary citizens, you can very well do your share by not using our policemen to further your own selfish interests. You must avoid paying bribes or offering gifts to get away with the rules. You cannot be a party to situations where our policemen have to make a hard choice between enforcing the law, or turning a blind eye for an “extra” income. These are all sources of corruption and connivance that break down the institution of law enforcement in our country.

Magkaisa na po tayong lahat para makamtan natin ang katahimikan at kapayapaan dito sa ating bansa. Katulad ng mga natatanging alagad ng batas na ating ginawaran ng parangal sa araw na ito, kaya po nating makatulong para sa ikauunlad ng ating bayan kung tayo ay magsasama-sama at magtutulungan.

Kaya, magkaisa na po tayo at magtulungan para sa matagal na nating pangarap na katahimikan at kapayapaan dito sa ating bansa. Ito rin ang magiging susi tungo sa tagumpay at kaunlaran ng sambayanang Pilipino.

Muli ay personal ko pong binabati ang mga tumanggap ng parangal bilang outstanding policemen sa taong ito: sina Police Chief Inspector Ligaya Lomuntad Sim-Cabal, SPO1 Bobby Amancio Madamba, SPO3 Rudy Abdulla Yusop, SPO4 Vicente Monsalve Belaro, SPO4 Maria Cecilia Robles Detablan, SPO4 Francisco Fragante Huesca, SPO4 Chito Togonon de Aro, SPO4 Venancio Neri Maling, at SPO3 Perfecto Silvederio Codinera.

Umaasa akong higit pa ninyong pag-iibayuhin at pagbubutihin ang inyong paglingkod sa ating mga kababayan.

Maraming salamat po at maligayang pasko sa inyong lahat!

*Source: **University of the Philippines Main Library***

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Speech of President Estrada at the Pamaskong Handog ng Pangulo 2000 sa Navotas at Malabon, December 14, 2000

**Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the Pamaskong Handog ng Pangulo 2000 sa Navotas at Malabon**

[Delivered at C-4, Navotas, Metro Manila, December 14, 2000]

Binabati ko po ng isang maligayang pasko ang lahat ng ating mga kababayan dito sa Navotas at Malabon, lalung-lalo na kayong mga naririto ngayon.

Ang tunay na kahulugan dawn g pasko ay ang pagbibigayan. Sa araw na iyon, ipinakita ng Diyos ang Kaniyang pagmamahal sa atin nang ibigay Niya sa mundo ang Kanyang mahal na Anak upang iligtas tayo sa ating mga kasalanan. Kaya, ako’y nagagalak na makasama kayong lahat dito para sa ating pagbibigay ng regalo sa mga kababayang mahihirap.

Ang mga kapus-palad nating kababayan ay may espesyal na lugar sa aking puso. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit taun-taon ay nagdaraos tayo ng ganitong pamimigay ng mga regalo para sa kanila.

Sinikap kong makarating dito sa kabila ng mabigat na problemang aking hinaharap dahil ako ay naniniwala na mas mahalaga ang makapagbigay ako ng ligaya sa ating mga kababayan, lalo na ngayong kapaskuhan. Nais ko rin kayong pasalamat sa pahayag ninyo ng suporta at pagtitiwala sa akin, sa kabila ng mga paninira ng aking mga kalaban nitong mga nakaraang araw.

Bilang ama ng ating bansa, hangad kong mabigyan ng maganda at masaganang buhay ang ating mga kababayan, hindi lamang ngayong pasko kundi sa buong taon at sa mga taon pang darating. Ako ay naging pangulo sa tulong ng masang Pilipino, kaya naman bilang pagtanaw ng utang na loob ko sa inyo, ginagawa ko ang lahat upang tuparin ang pangakong ibabangon ko sa kahirapan ang ating mga kababayan, lalung-lalo na ang mga kapus-palad at mahihirap. At gagawin ko ito hanggang sa matapos ang aking panunungkulan bilang pangulo sa taong 2004.

Ibinoto ninyo ako upang maglingkod sa inyong lahat. Ngayon, ako ay sumusumpa na hindi ko kailanman tatalikuran ang pangakong binitawan ko sa inyo. Patuloy akong maglilingkod sa inyong lahat hanggang sa huling sandal ng aking pagiging pangulo.

Kaya naman sa araw na ito ay nais kong malaman ninyo na ang pagsisikap nating ito ay hindi matatapos sa pagbibigay ng regalo. Ako, sampu ng aking mga kasama sa gabinete, ay patuloy na gagawin ang lahat para matugunan ang mga pangunahing pangangailangan ng lahat ng pamilyang Pilipino upang mabuhay sila ng mapayapa at masagana.

Isa na rito ay ang pabahay para sa ating mga mahihirap na kababayan o *mass housing* na itinuturing kong *centerpiece program* ng aking administrasyon.

Nasimulan na po natin ang ilang proyektong pabahay dito sa inyong lugar, kagaya ng *Malabon Socialized Medium-rise Housing*. Sa tulong ng pamahalaang lokal ng Malabon, *National Housing Authority at Metropolitan Development Authority* ay sinimulan na nating ipatayo ang sampung *five-storey buildings* sa Barangay Baritan sa

Malabon. Ipagkakaloob po natin ang mga animnaraang (600) *housing units* ng proyektong ito sa mga karaniwang empleyado at iba pang mahihirap nating kababayan sa nasabing bayan.

Tulad ng nasabi ko nang dumalaw ako sa Malabon noong nakaraang Mayo, inatasan ko na ang *Housing and Urban Development Coordination Council* na pangunahan ang resettlement component ng pagsasaayos ng riles ng tren patungong norte. Humigit-kumulang sa labimpitong libong (17,000) pamilya ang maaapektuhan ng proyektong ito. Ngayon ay inaayos na natin ang pagtutulungan ng iba't-ibang ahensya ng pamahalaan para sa reloksyon ng mga *informal settlers* mula sa *right of way* ng *northrail*.

Ipinag-utos ko na rin na walang gagawing demolisyon ng mga *squatter areas* hanggang walang lugar na mapaglilipatan sa kanila. Gayundin, ang mga lupang pag-aari ng gobyerno na hindi ginagamit at napapabayaang lamang ay gagamitin nating lahat para sa ating programang pabahay para sa mahihirap.

Hindi po tayo nangangako na sabay-sabay nating mabibigyan ng katuparan ang lahat ng pangangailangan ng mga mahihirap nating mamamayan. Ang pangako po lamang natin sa ngayon ay patuloy tayong hahanap ng paraan upang mabigyan ng kaukulang suporta ang ating mga programa. Ang hiling ko lamang ay bigyan pa ninyo ako ng sapat na panahon dahil alam naman ninyo siguro na malaki ang problemang ating hinaharap para pagkasyahin ang pondo ng pamahalaan.

Marahil ay natatandaan pa ninyo na nang ako ay naupo bilang pangulo, walang laman ang kabang-bansa at marami pang utang na naiwan. Kaya, gustuhin man nating ipatupad kaagad ang mga programang tutugon sa mga pangangailangan ng mga mamamayan ay hindi natin ito magawang lahat. Ganoon pa man, nagtipid tayo at nag-ipon ng salapi habang nagbabayad tayo ng mga utang. At nang unti-unti na tayong nakaipon, nagsimula tayong magpatupad ng ating mga prayoridad, tulad ng programa sa pagkain o *food security*, ang pabahay o *mass housing*, at ang pagkakaroon ng peace and order sa bansa.

Hangad natin ang *food security* dahil walang Pilipinong dapat magutom sa kaniyang sariling bayan. Para mangyari ito, naglunsad tayo ng *Agricultural Modernization Program* na nagpatayo ng mas maraming *irrigation systems, farm-to-market roads, at post-harvest facilities*. Dahil dito, naging maganda ang ani ng ating mga magsasaka at lumago ng 3.5 percent ang sektor ng agrikultura nitong kasalukuyang taon.

Ang pabahay sa masa ay ating patuloy na itinataguyod upang matupad ang pangarap ng marami nating mga kababayan na magkaroon ng sariling tahanan. Binibigyan natin ng prayoridad ang mga itinuturing kong mga bayani ng ating panahin – ang mga guro, mga pulis, mga sundalo, at mga *overseas Filipino workers* – upang bago ako bumaba sa pagka-pangulo sa taong 2004 ay lahat sila ay may sarili nang tahanan.

Nabawasan na rin ang kriminalidad sa Metro Manila kung saan dati-rati ay halos linggo-linggo, wala tayong nababasa sa mga pahayagan kundi mga *kidnapping, carnapping at bank robberies*. Nagtagumpay rin tayo para mtigil na ang kaguluhan sa Mindanao na kagagawan ng MILF at Abu Sayyaf.

Nagpapatupad din tayo ng iba't-ibang *infrastructure projects* na magdudulot ng ginhawa sa ating mga kababayan. Sa pagbubukas po ng susunod na taon ay sisimulan na ang konstruksyon ng *3.9 billion pesos worth* na *KAMANAVA Flood Control and Drainage System* para matigil na ang madalas na pagbaha sa mga baying masasakop nito. Kasama sa proyektong ito ang pag-aayos ng *floodwalls* ng Malabon-Navotas River at ng *Dampalit River Dikes*. Pasisimulan na rin natin ang *dredging* ng Malabon-Navotas River at ng Tullahan River.

Noong nakaraang Mayo ay ipinangako natin ang *rehabilitation* ng *Plaza Rodriguez Amphitheater* sa Malabon para ito ay magamit sa mga laking pagtitipon. Ikinagagalak ko pong sabihin sa inyo ngayon na nasimlan na ang pagpapagawa ng nasabing gusali.

Gusto ko ring samantalain ang pagkakataong ito para ibalita sa inyo na ang panukala para maging lungsod ang bayan ng Malabon ay pinag-aaralan na sa kongreso, sa ilalim ng pagsisikap ng ating minamahal na Senador Tessie Aquino-Oreta. Ito ay inaasahan nating maipapasa sa lalong madaling panahon.

Ito ay ilan lamang po sa mga programa at proyektong ating ipinapatupad para mabigyan ng mas matiwasay na pamumuhay ang ating mga kababayan. Kaya nga po ako ay nagtataka na may nagsasabing walang nagagawa ang aking admintrasyon para sa ating mga mamayan, lalo na ang mga mahihirap.

Sa kabila ng ating mga pagsisikap na mapabuti ang kalagayan ng ating mga mamamayan at ng ating bansa, may ilang sektor naman ng ating lipunan na wala nang ginawa kundi ang bumatikos at sirain ang magaganda nating nasimulan. Kung ang kanilang panahon, lakas, isip at salapi ay ginagamit lamang nila upang maging mas mabilis ang pag-unlad ng ating bayan, makakatulong pa sana sila upang maging mas mabuti ang kalagayan sa buhay ng ating mga mamamayan.

Gayunpaman, handa akong tanggapin ang magiging resulta ng ginaganap na *impeachment process* sa senado, basta't ito ay sang-ayon sating Saligang Batas. Pero inuulit ko po sa harap ninyo na wala akong tinanggap na kahit isang sentimo na galing sa anumang uri ng ilegal na sugal. Malinis ang aking konsensya. Wala akong itinatago sa ating mga kababayan. At ako'y naniniwala na, sa dakong huli, mananaig ang buong katotohanan.

Samantala, ako ay nananawagan sa mga gumagawa ng kaguluhan ngayon na mas mabuti pa kung ang pagtuunan natin ng pansin ay ang mga bagay na makakalutas sa mga problema ng ating bansa. Pakinggan natin ang tinig ng sambayanan at hindi ang ingay ng iilan lamang.

Hindi sapat ang mga sigaw at talumpati para maihahon ang ating mga kababayan mula sa kahirapan. Ang kailangan natin ngayon ay gumawa at kumilos para sa maralitang Pilipino.

Kailangan nating magkaisa at magtulungan para harapin ang hamon ng globalisasyon na makipagsabayan sa ibang bansa. Kung tayo ay patuloy na nag-aaway-away at nagsisiraan, ang mga kalapit-bansa naman natin ay nagpapalakpakan dahil ang dayuhang kapital at mga turista na dapat sa atin pumapasok ay sa kanila pumupunta. Kailangang magkaisa at magtulungan tayo upang mapabilis ang ating pag-unlad.

Naalala ko pa na nang nagpunta ako sa Vietnam para sa isang state visit noong nakaraang taon, nakita ko ang kanilang pagkakaisa doon, kaya naman kahit dumanas sila ng mahigit dalawampung taon ng digmaan, sila ngayon ay *3rd largest rice-exporting country in the world*, samantalang tayo ay nag-i-import pa rin ng bigas hanggang ngayon.

Kaya, hinihiling ko sa ating mga kababayan na tigilan na ang pagsisiraan at awayan. Sa halip ay tayo ay magsama-sama at magtulungan para sa ikabubuti ng lahat ng mga mamamayan, lalong-lalo na ang mahihirap.

Ngayon ay wala na tayong kalaban kundi iisa na lamang at iyan ay kahirapan. Ginagawa natin ang lahat para wakasan na ang kahirapan sa ating bansa, pero inaamin ko na kahit ako ang inyong pangulo, hindi ko kayang labanan ang kahirapan nang nag-iisa. Kailangan ko ang tulong ninyo at ng buong sambayang Pilipino.

At makakaasa kayo na ibibigay ko ang aking buong lakas at kakayahan, gayundin ang lahat ng kapangyarihan ng tanggapan ng pangulo, upang maging maayos ang pamumuhay ng ating mga kababayan.

Kaya nga po, hinihiling ko na magkaisa na tayo at magtulungan upang labanan ang kahirapan at buuin ang isang mas matatag at mas maunlad na Pilipinas. Patunayan natin sa buong mundo na tayong mga Pilipino ay kayang bumangon sa pamamagitan ng sarili nating pagsisikap at pagtutulungan.

Maraming salamat po at maligayang paskong muli sa inyong lahat!

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

Speech of President Estrada at the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Holy Family of San Andres Bukid Association, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila at Home Development Mutual Fund, December 15, 2000

**Speech
of**

**His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines**

**At the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Holy Family of San Andres Bukid Association,
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila at Home Development Mutual Fund**

[Delivered at the Heroes Hall, Malacañang, December 15, 2000]

PABAHAY SA TAO BILANG PRAYORIDAD NG GOBYERNO

Isang taos-pusong pagbati po ang aking ipina-aabot sa lahat ng ating mga kababayang naririto ngayon para saksihan ang mahalagang okasyong ating ginanap sa araw na ito.

Ang *Memorandum of Agreement* o kasunduan na nilagdaan ngayon sa pagitan ng *Holy Family of San Andres Bukid Association*, ng *Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila*, at ng *Home Development Mutual Fund* o *Pag-Ibig Fund* ay isang makasaysayang hakbang sa pagpapatupad ng ating programa sa pabahay. Ako ay lubos na nagpapasalamat sa liderato ng ating *Roman Catholic Church* sa kanilang partisipasyon at pagtulong sa aking administrasyon para maisulong ang ating programa sa pabahay para sa mahihirap.

Since I assumed the Presidency more than two years ago, it has been my commitment to see to it that more Filipinos – especially the poor – are provided roofs over their heads and assured of tenure over their lands. This is the reason why I made housing as the centerpiece program of my administration.

Ang pabahay sa masa ay ating patuloy na itinataguyod upang matupad ang pangarap ng marami nating mga kababayan na magkaroon ng sariling tahanan. Nang ako ay umupo bilang pangulo, higit-kumulang sa tatlong milyong pamilya ang nangangailangan ng pabahay sa buong bansa.

Dito sa kaMaynilaan, kung saan nagsisiksikan na ang mga bahay, ay may mga nakatira pa sa mga mapanganib na lugar, tulad ng gilid ng ilog at estero, o maging sa ilalim ng tulay, dati-rati, ang mga iskwater ay dito lamang sa metro manila matatagpuan. Pero ngayon, matatagpuan na rin sila sa halos lahat ng malalaking lungsod sa ating bansa, tulad ng Cebu, Davao, Cagayan de Oro, at Zamboanga kaya kailangang bilisan natin ang papapatayo ng maraming bahay para hindi na lumaki ang kakulangan nito.

Ang tunay na layunin ng ating programang pabahay ay yung tinatawag na *Security of Tenure*. Ito ay ang pagbibigay ng katiyakan sa mga maralitang taga-lungsod na ang lupa at bahay kung saan sila nakatira ay magiging pag-aari nila. Sa tulong ng *Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council*, na pinamumunuan ni Secretary Lenny de Jesus, ay isinusulong na ng pamahalaan ang mga programa tungo sa *Security of Tenure*.

Ipinag-utos ko na rin na walang gagawing demolisyon ng mga *squatter areas* hanggang walang *relocation site* na mapaglilipatan sa mga nakatira doon. Kung maaari ay titiyakin din nating may hanapbuhay na naghihintay sa kanila para hindi sila matuksong bumalik sa masikip na lungsod.

Sa ngayon po ay maliwanag na ang ating mga patakarán na may kinalaman sa *informal settlers*. Uunahin po nating bigyan ng pabahay ang mga mapanganib na lugar, tulad ng estero sa tabi ng pasig river. At yung mga nasa *right-of-way* ng malalaking *infrastructure projects* ng pamahalaan.

Gayundin, ang mga lupang pag-aari ng gobyerno na hindi ginagamit at napapabayaang lamang ay gagamitin nating lahat para sa ating programang pabahay sa mahihirap. Palagay ko po ay matutulungan tayo ng simbahan sa kami'yang ito, dahil sila man ay may-ari din ng malalaking lupa sa bansa.

This is one possible area of cooperation between the government and the Catholic Church amidst the ongoing political crisis that has engulfed the whole nation. If we can do this, we will prove to everyone that not only can the church and state work together towards the same goal but also follow god's words to help the least of his brethren by responding to the housing needs of the poor.

Kaya ako po ay nagagalak na sa pamamagitan ng kasunduang pinirmahan sa araw na ito, matutupad na rin ang pangarap ng mga kababayan natin sa parokya ng *Holy Family* sa *San Andres* na magkaroon ng sarili nilang tahanan.

Ayon sa *Memorandum of Agreement* na ito, magbibigay ang *Pag-Ibig Fund* ng *Funding Commitment Line* na may kasamang *letter of credit* sa pangalan ng asosasyon para sa higit-kumulang sa isang daan at walumpung-milyong piso (P180m). Ang halagang ito ay gagamitin sa pagpapatayo ng anim na *medium-rise buildings* na may animnaraan at siyamnapung (690) *housing units*.

Sa ilalim din ng kasunduang ito, ililipat naman ng *Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila* ang karapatan at pag-aari ng naturang lupa sa asosasyon, na siya namang pipili ng kontraktor na magpapatuloy ng *land development* at magpapatayo ng *medium-rise buildings*.

Nais ko pong pasalamatang ang *Pag-Ibig Fund* sa pagkakaloob nito ng tulong para matupad ang pangarap ng mga kasapi ng *Holy Family of San Andres Bukid Association* na magkaroon ng sariling bahay.

Gusto ko ring samantalain ang okasyong ito para batiin ang lahat ng bumubuo ng pag-ibig sa kanilang 20th anniversary kahapon. Nagpapasalamat ako sa kanilang dalawampung taong patuloy na pagtataguyod ng programang pabahay ng ating pamahalaan.

Muli ko ring pinasasalamatang ang *Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila* sa kanilang pakikipagtulungan sa ating programa sa pabahay.

Ang matinding pangangailangan sa pabahay ng ating mga kababayan ay hindi po matutugunan ng isang institusyon lamang. Tayo ay kailangang magtulong-tulong upang malutas ang suliraning ito.

Hindi po tayo nangangako na sabay-sabay nating mabibigyan ng katuparan ang lahat ng pangangailangan ng mga mahihirap nating mamamayan. Ang pangako po lamang natin sa ngayon ay patuloy tayong hahanap ng paraan upang mabigyan ng kaukulang suporta ang ating mga programa. Ang hiling ko lamang ay bigyan pa ninyo ako ng sapat na panahon dahil alam naman ninyo siguro na malaki ang problemang ating hinaharap para pagkasyahin ang pondo ng pamahalaan.

Marahil ay natatandaan pa ninyo na nang ako ay naupo bilang pangulo, walang laman ang kabang-bansa at marami pang utang na naiwan. Kaya, gustuhin man nating ipatupad kaagad ang mga programang tutugon sa mga pangangailangan ng mga mamamayan ay hindi natin ito magawang lahat. Ganoon pa man, nagtipid tayo at nag-ipon ng salapi habang nagbabayad tayo ng mga utang. At nang unti-unti na tayong nakaipon, nagsimula tayong magpatupad ng ating mga prayoridad, tulad ng programa sa pagkain o *food security*, ang pabahay o *mass housing*, at ang pagkakaroon ng peace and order sa bansa.

Hangad natin ang *food security* dahil walang pilipinong dapat magutom sa kanyang sariling bayan. Para mangyari ito, naglunsad tayo ng *agricultural modernization program* na nagpatayo ng mas maraming *irrigation systems*, *farm-to-market roads*, at *post-harvest facilities*. Dahil dito, naging maganda ang ani ng ating mga magsasaka at lumago ng 3.5 percent ang sektor ng agrikultura nitong kasalukuyang taon.

Sa ating programa sa pabahay, binibigyan natin ng prayoridad ang mga itinuturing kong mga bayani ng ating panahon – ang mga guro, mga pulis mga sundalo, at mga *Overseas Filipino Workers* – upang bago ako bumaba sa pagka-pangulo sa taong 2004 ay lahat sila ay may sarili nang tahanan.

Nabawasan na rin ang kriminalidad sa Metro Manila kung saan dati-rati ay halos linggo-linggo, wala tayong nababasa sa mga pahayagan kundi mga *kidnapping*, *carnapping* at *bank robberies*. Nagtagumpay rin tayo para matigil na ang kaguluhan sa Mindanao na kagagawan ng MILF at Abu Sayyaf.

Ngayon ay wala na tayong kalaban kundi iisa na lamang at iyan ay ang kahirapan. Ginagawa ng pamahalaan ang lahat para wakasan na ang kahirapan sa ating bansa, pero inaamin ko na kahit ako ay pangulo, hindi ko kayang labanan ang kahirapan nang nag-iisa. Kailangan ko ang tulong ninyo at ng buong sambayanang Pilipino.

Sa pagkakataong ito, maliwanag na ang Simbahang Katoliko ay nakiki-isa sa ating hangaring bumuti ang kalagayan sa buhay ng mga kapatid nating maralita at lubos na nangangailangan. At inaasahan ko na pag-iibayuhin pa natin ang ganitong pagkakaisa at pagtutulungan sa darating na panahon, alang-alang sa mahihirap nating mga kababayan.

Bilang pangulo at ama ng ating bansa, wala akong tanging hangad ngayon kundi ang mabigyan ng mas magandang kinabukasan ang ating mga kababayan. At ako ay naniniwala na mapapabilis ang katuparan ng pangarap na ito sa pakikipagtulungan ng ating simbahan.

Maraming salamat po at Maligayang Pasko sa inyong lahat!

Source: **University of the Philippines Main Library**

**Speech of President Estrada during the 65th Foundation Anniversary of the Armed Forces of the Philippines,
December 21, 2000 Speech
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the 65th Foundation Anniversary of the Armed Forces of the Philippines**

[Delivered at the GHQ Grandstand, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, December 21, 2000]

SERVICE AND COMMITMENT FOR NATIONAL PROGRESS

Isang mainit at masiglang pagbati ang ipinaa-abot ko sa mga opisyal, mga tauhan, mga kawani, at mga piling panauhin ng ating Hukbong Sandatahan ng Pilipinas. Lubos akong nagagalak na muli kayong makasama sa okasyon ng inyong ika-animnapu't-limang anibersaryo sa araw na ito.

This day is full of meaning and significance not only for you but for the country. Today, we observe the anniversary of one of our important institutions, the Armed Forces of the Philippines. We celebrate the achievements and distinguished history of this institution by paying tribute to our soldiers now and in the past. More significantly, today, you renew your unqualified allegiance to the constitution and your unwavering commitment to democracy in the service of God, country and people. I am proud, as your commander-in-chief, to join and lead you tonight in reaffirming this commitment.

As we call to mind 65 years of gallant history and heroism of the men and women of our Armed Forces of the Philippines. I cannot help but be touched by a deep sense of national pride.

Sa ganang akin, ang ating sandatahang lakas, habang tumatagal ay lalong tumitibay, lalong tumatatag.

Sa mahabang panahon ng inyong paglilingkod sa sambayanang Pilipino, hindi nagbago ang inyong paninidigan na ang inyong tungkulin ay ipagtanggol ang ating demokrasya at ang karapatan at kapakanan ng ating bansa. Kahanga-hanga ang inyong ipinamalas na katatagan sa maraming naging pagsubok na ating dinaanan bilang isang bansa.

I am pleased that you have chosen "Freedom: Your right, our responsibility," as the theme of your celebration this year. This is a theme that is most relevant because freedom is a right that must be defended, and it is our common responsibility to preserve and to protect it. This embodies the very principle, which Filipino soldiers have always stood for.

We observe today's ceremonies at a time of great challenge for us to preserve and defend the integrity of the constitution and the fabric of our democratic framework which we have sworn to protect. I believe that your theme this year speaks of consistency and steadfastness, for it depicts an armed forces that remains committed and able to defend, protect and serve our country without compromising the basic rights of our people.

I give recognition to the fact that, despite the many challenges and political issues that confront us today, you have stood your ground – faithful to your sworn duty to uphold the constitution and its democratic processes, committed to accomplishing the nation's defense objectives.

Before I appointed the current AFP Chief of Staff, General Angelo Reyes, I reminded him that his loyalty should be first and foremost, to the constitution and his country and his loyalty to his commander-in-chief should be subordinate to it. I told him that this should be the case because the Armed Forces of the Philippines is an organization that derives its mandate from the constitution.

Section 3, Article 2, of the constitution clearly states that (and I quote): “Civilian authority is, at all times, supreme over the military. The Armed Forces of the Philippines is the protector of the people and the state. Its goal is to secure the sovereignty of the state and the integrity of the national territory.” (End of quote)

This means fighting all forces which seek to overthrow the government, impair the independence of the nation, or dismember any portion of its territory, because of this heavy responsibility, the military should never be involved in any political exercises as these may compromise their constitutional mandate. And I am happy to note that the AFP has consistently adhered to the principle of non-partisanship.

Hindi ako nagkamali sa pagpili kay General Reyes. Ang kanyang malasakit sa AFP ay hindi lamang sa mga kapwa niya generals kundi hanggang sa pinakamababang sundalo at enlisted personnel.

Your selfless devotion and dedication to duty have now gained for you the people’s trust and respect. They are assured that their armed forces can be relied upon because of its proven commitment to the duties it has been sworn to fulfill. You have earned the people’s trust and respect because you have made their lives more secure and more peaceful by the sacrifices and pains that you have to endure.

There is no denying that the Armed Forces of the Philippines has played a critical role in the development of our nation, most notably in the area of maintaining national security.

Nangunguna na rito ang maagap at masigasig ninyong pagtugon sa napakalaking hamon ng mga rebeldeng grupo sa Mindanao, gaya ng Moro Islamic Liberation Front at Abu Sayyaf Group.

Four months into our offensive against the MILF year you were able to capture their main headquarters, Camp Abubakar, followed by the fall of other camps and defensive positions. As a result, a large number of the MILF rebels have either surrendered to the government or simply laid down their arms. The same way was true for the Abu Sayyaf. Your effective and relentless campaign not only safely rescued most of their remaining hostages but also further demoralized the already-splintered group.

Dahil sa inyong mga sakripisyo, nagtagumpay tayo laban sa MILF at Abu Sayyaf. Nang dahil sa inyo, nanatiling matatag ang ating pagka-bansa at ang buong sambayanang Pilipino ay nagpapasalamat sa inyo.

I commend all our soldiers for your vigorous efforts to protect our nation’s integrity, I extend to you my wholehearted gratitude for ensuring that we have one sovereign republic, one flag, one territory, one constitution, and one armed forces.

Ipinakita ninyo hindi lamang ang inyong katapatan sa bayan kundi pati na rin ang inyong katapangan laban sa mga kaaway ng bansa. It was a great sacrifice with a great cost, but one that fully demonstrates our undivided stance and decisive action.

I urge you, therefore, to keep up the good work and continue to do your share to find a just and lasting solution to the problem in Mindanao.

On the international scene, the AFPs participation in the East Timor peacekeeping force has been of particular interest and a great source of pride for our country. Our troops there have performed very well in delivering our country’s commitment to help preserve peace in the region.

In other areas of concern, I am pleased that the AFP has been deeply involved in nation-building and socio-civic efforts.

Laging nangunguna ang ating sandatahang lakas at pagtugon sa mga national emergencies, gaya ng nangyaring trahedya sa Payatas. Daang-daang pamilya ang nailikas at higit-kumulang sa tatlong daang bangkay ang nakuha ang ating mga sundalo sa ilalim ng basurang gumuho.

Sa nagdaang super typhoons na Reming at Senyang, naroon din kayo upang maghatid ng mga relief goods at medical supplies sa mga nasalanta ng bagyo, hindi lamang sa Metro Manila kundi sa iba pang bahagi ng Luzon.

The AFP engineers have also been responsible for the construction of infrastructure projects worth more than one billion pesos, including both new and rehabilitated roads and bridges. These have opened up livelihood opportunities and access to basic services to our far-flung communities.

The AFP has also been contributing significantly to environmental protection. Through the planting of thousands of trees, combating illegal logging, and even declogging esteros in Metro Manila.

While responding to diverse challenges in its various areas of responsibility, the AFP has laid the groundwork for the evolution of a modern, credible and mission-effective organization. *Ito ang matagal na nating hangarin para matugunan nang buong husay ng sandatahang lakas ang mga hamon ng ating panahon.* With the release this year of more than P5 billion to your modernization program, the AFP wasted no time in reviewing existing policies so as to jump-start the bidding and acquisition process.

I congratulate the defense department, under the leadership of Secretary Orlando Mercado, for having done pioneering work in the entire bureaucracy by establishing an information technology-based procurement system to ensure transparency in your transactions. Your unrelenting fight against graft and corruption will surely enhance your credibility.

I note that our defense secretary has implemented my instructions to empower our soldiers by giving them access to information. The retirement and separation benefits system, or RSBS has also been directed operations and other information pertaining to the administration of their pension fund contributions.

This is only the first step. By next year, each and every soldier must be given a mailbox so that every soldier can easily communicate with their headquarters and easily access the websites we have established for them and our public.

The AFP, indeed, has been very busy this year. You have more than credibly delivered on the demands of your service to our country and people. Let me speak for every Filipino as I congratulate you for a job well done.

Such a performance and commitment deserve more than commendation and gratitude. It is only fair that we give something in return for your noble deeds.

In accordance with my pronouncement to extend all possible assistance within our means to uplift the lives of our ordinary soldiers, I am proud to report that we have made significant progress in providing for their basic needs.

We have gone full stride with our housing projects through the AFP housing board's on-base and off-base housing programs. Today there are nearly 7,000 military quarters nationwide allocated to some 2,300 officers and 4,500 enlisted personnel. This is a considerable improvement from the 4,400 available housing units in 1995.

In close coordination with the private sector, the DENR and the Bureau of Lands, portions of 14 military preservations throughout the country have been identified for housing purposes of AFP personnel. Three of these areas have already been approved: Camp Riego de Dios in Tanza, Cavite; Camp Aquino in San Miguel, Tarlac; and Camp Evangelista in Cagayan de Oro City. Through this program, we hope to address the lack of housing and quarters for many of our men in uniform.

Our soldiers' dependents now receive more educational benefits through various scholarship grants. In addition, there are numerous other scholarships given by our friends in the private sector, we believe that by making these educational grants available, we can ease the burden of our soldiers in providing a secure future for their children.

Our support to our soldiers will not be complete without providing them proper medical attention and facilities. This is most important because of the very nature of the military profession. I learned that this problem has long been neglected in the past during my visit to the AFP medical center, which we consider as our foremost hospital for our soldiers.

In response to this urgent need, we have set up the Don Emilio Ejercito Diagnostic Center to house the hi-tech medical equipment for the hospital, and I personally inaugurated this yesterday. Moreover, the AFP through NEDA is currently pursuing a mixed credit scheme with the Government of Spain for the upgrading of the medical center's equipment.

It will not be long before the military will enjoy first-class medical facilities comparable to that of big private hospitals. Again, this is one way of proving to our soldiers that their welfare is a paramount concern of my administration.

I firmly believe that no amount of money or material benefit can ever repay your dedication and heroic deeds for our country. But rest assured that our efforts will not stop here.

I wish to acknowledge the support of the private sector, especially non-government organizations, in helping answer the needs of our men in uniform. The assistance you have given to the military will go a long way in securing the country's interests and contributing to the growth and development of the whole nation.

In celebrating the 65th anniversary of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, I urge everyone to contribute his share towards our national progress. Only through your strong commitment to the advancement of our defense that we can start looking forward to a more stable, peaceful and prosperous future.

We have already proven our capabilities in defending the territorial integrity of our country as demonstrated in our campaign in Mindanao. We made it because we had known all along that we owe it to the majority of the Filipino people to give them the peace that they deserve.

As we look forward to the year ahead, may our unity as a people prevail so we can face our challenges with greater confidence. I firmly believe that, as long as we devote our energies toward the preservation of peace and oneness, we will overcome those challenges and come out of them stronger and wiser.

Sa ating mga magigiting na tauhan at kawani ng sandatahang lakas, patuloy sana kayong manatiling tapat sa inyong tungkulin at maging matibay sa pagharap sa mga pagsubok na darating sa ating bansa. Kailangan ninyo itong gawin dahil ang intong tagumpay at tagumpay din ng buong sambayanang Pilipino.

Maraming salamat at maligayang pasko sa inyong lahat.

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

MESSAGES TO THE CONGRESS

Joseph Ejercito Estrada, First State of the Nation Address, July 27, 1998

**State of the Nation Address
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
To the Congress
Session Hall of the House of Representatives**

[Delivered at Batasang Pambansa, Quezon City, on July 27, 1998]

Ang Pangalawang Pangulo ng Republika ng Pilipinas. Kagalang-galang na Pangulo ng Senado. Kagalang-galang na Speaker ng Mababang Kapulungan. Kagalang-galang na Punong Hukom ng Korte Suprema. Kagalang-galang na mga miyembro ng Kongreso ng Pilipinas. Kagalang-galang na mga kagawad ng mga Gabinete. Their excellencies of the diplomatic corps. Mga piling panauhin. Mga minamahal kong mga kababayan:

Noong Mayo onse, mahigit na 10 milyong Pilipino ang nagdesisyon na pamunuan natin ang bansa, patungo sa bagong milenyo.

Ngayon, sila ang nagtatanong, ano ba ang gagawin ng bagong pamunuang ito upang ihatid ang ating bansa sa bagong siglo?

Today, I stand before you with an accounting of the present and with a road map for our future.

Paano ba tayo itatawid sa krisis na nakabalot sa ating ekonomiya?

Nasaan na ba tayo ngayon?

Saan ba tayo nanggaling?

At saan ba tayo patutungo?

Hindi na ako magpapaliguy-ligoy. Nasa harap tayo ngayon ng matinding krisis na gumugulo sa buong Asya.

Ayon sa mga eksperto, wala pa tayo sa pinakamalubhang yugto ng krisis.

Kung babalewalain natin ang kinalalagyan natin ngayon, tiyak na lulubog ang ating bansa sa bigat ng ganap ng recession.

Malubha ang lagay ng ating ekonomiya, at namimiligro ang kabang-yaman ng bansa.

Ngunit hindi nangangahulugan na walang magagawa ang pamahalaan. At lalong hindi nangangahulugan na walang magagawa ang sambayanang Pilipino.

Sawa na ang taumbayan sa mga walang-kabuluhang pangako't palabas. Sa harap ng matinding krisis na ating pinagdaanan nitong nakaraang taon, ang kailangan nati'y mga mabilis at mabisang lunas. Ito ang matinding hamon na dapat nating tugunan—tayong lahat: ang panguluhan, ang Kongreso, ang pribadong sektor, ang mamamayan. Mabigat ang hamon na ito—subali't buo ang tiwala kong mas matimbang ang pinagsama nating talino, sipag, at kakayahan.

But let us first make an accounting of the present. A true accounting that is perhaps long overdue.

Nitong unang bahagi ng 1998, ang paglago ng gross domestic product [GDP] ay katumbas lamang sa 20 percent ng antas na naitala noong 1997.

Nangalahati ang produksyon ng mga pabrika natin. Pawang pagbabawas ng imbentaryo—at hindi ang paglikha ng mga produkto—ang ginawa ng mga industriya natin. Sa kanilang pangangamba sa recession, lalo lamang pinalala ang problema.

Bumagsak ang ating produksyong pang-agrikultura. Bumaba nang 14 percent ang ani ng palay, at bumaba din nang 24 percent ang ani ng mais.

Malimit nating tukuyin ang phenomenon ng El Niño, subalit ang tunay na ugat ng suliranin ay ang pangkalahatang sektor ng agrikultura.

Halos double-digit na ang ating inflation rate. Napakataas ang interes na sinisingil ng mga bangko kaya naman hindi makautang ang marami nating negosyante. At lalo namang hinigpitan ng mga bangko ang kanilang pagpapautang, kaya't maraming kalakal ang nagsasara.

Dahil sa debalwasyon at sa El Niño, tuluy-tuloy ang pagbagsak ng ating piso. Ito ay lubhang mabigat para sa ating mga kababayan natin na isang kahig, isang tuka ang kinagisnang pamumuhay.

Unemployment is now 13.3 percent and still growing; underemployment, 20 percent and also growing. 4.3 million Filipinos need a job. Twice that number wish they had a real, full-time job.

Maaaring sabihing ito ay maliit pa. Subali't paano mo sasabihin sa pamilyang gutom na mas masama ang kalagayan ng ibang pamilya sa ibang bansa?

One lost job is one hungry family, and one cold statistic I cannot agree.

Statistics claim that the number of poor people has gone down in the past decade. I wonder if the people believe these statistics.

Wala sa akin ang mga statistics na iyan. Poor is poor—walang pera, walang pagkain, walang bubong, walang dignidad, at lalung-lalo na, walang pag-asa.

Hindi lang iyan. 'Yung mayaman ay higit pang yumaman, at ang mahihirap lalong humirap.

I wish that I could say that we shall set up a job security fund soon. But I don't want to add to the inventory of unfunded laws and bills that now amount to P400 billion worth of promises that will never be fulfilled.

According to statistics, in the past six years, as the Philippine economy grew, the richest 10 percent got 40 percent of the national income.

And the poorest 10 percent? Wala pang dalawang porsiyento.

It is worse in the countryside, where 40 percent of Filipinos still work for one-third of wages in the city. That is why they come here. Only to find that there are no jobs, or none for which they qualify.

Noong araw, inakala ko na marami na kusang darating sa ating bansa ang mga banyagang negosyante dahil ang mga manggagawa natin ay mahuhusay at handang tumanggap ng mababang sahod. Hindi na ito totoo.

Napakababa ng productivity ng karaniwang manggagawang Pilipino dahil kalahati na lang sa kanila ang nakapagtapos sa mababang paaralan samantalang tatlumpu't tatlong porsiyento lang ang nakaabot ng high school.

Ngunit limitado ang pondo na maari nating ilaan para sa edukasyon; may kakulangan tayong 24,000 silid-aralan, at 4,000 guro.

Hindi lamang sa larangan ng edukasyon—hanggang ngayon, mahigit sa tatlumpung porsiyento ng tahanan sa bansa ay wala pa ring kuryente. At sa bounng Asya, sunod lamang sa bansang Hapon ang taas ng singil natin sa kuryente.

Sa larangan ng agrarian reform, na ngayon ay nasa ika-26 na taon na.

Only 57 percent of target areas have been distributed, while productivity has become lower.

This does not mean that the land should have been left with the landlords, but that the farmers should not have been left to fend for themselves.

This is where we are now. Add anarchy on the peace and order front, where the only thing organized is crime, and the only thing systematic is kidnapping. The result: capital flight. Yet some officials think they can attract foreign funds with tax incentives for potential kidnap victims.

Ang sinumang bagong Pangulo ay may pangarap at minimithing para sa bansa lalung-lalo na sa akin, na malaki ang inaasahan ng masang Pilipino. Ngunit gustuhin ko man na maibigay ang kanilang inaasahan sa lalong madaling panahon, paano ko ibibigay kung wala tayong sapat na pananalapi na igugugol para maiangat ang kanilang kabuhayan?

We have a P70 billion budget deficit and a consolidated public sector deficit that could go as high as P90 billion. Collection of taxes and duties are down, even as more and more tax exemptions and incentives cut deep into government revenues.

Government could borrow more. But that will only raise interest rates and worsen the economic slowdown. The result: less taxes and fewer jobs.

If high interest rates squeeze GNP by just two percent more, there will be half a million more jobless. But if we pressure the Bangko Sentral to print more money, inflation will shoot up.

Kaliwa't kanan, may latay, napakahirap tumimbang, at sadyang malala ang problema natin. Gayunpaman, nasa ugat ng problema ang nakikita kong solusyon.

The problems we face are of such magnitude as to require nothing less than heroic and concerted action. We must move upon them as a single community, bound together by common rules that we all agree to respect and obey.

To begin with, we have to reduce the cost of governance, costs that go higher and higher with each corrupt act, with each wasteful project.

Bilyun-bilyong piso ang nawawaldas sa mga proyektong maaksaya at kulang sa silbi, at lalong malaki pa ang nawawalang parang bula dahil sa patuloy na mga kurakot.

Business pays taxes, but mostly into the pockets of BIR agents or customs examiners instead of the national treasury.

In 1998 alone, we can save as much as P34 billion from pork barrel.

P4.6 billion went to the centennial celebration, but the Department of Social Welfare had to beg for P100 million in emergency food aid to drought victims in Mindanao, and did not get it.

The 1997 World Development Report ranks the Philippine Civil Service as among the most politicized in the world, with politics deciding appointments down to janitor. The 1992 Corruption Index ranked the Philippines as the second most corrupt country in the region.

Debt service took 27 percent of the national budget last year; P26.4 billion in the first semester of 1998 alone. The total external debt, including the private sector, is \$45.4 billion or P1.9 trillion pesos.

Nang ako'y maupo bilang Pangulo, nagulat ako nang ipaalam sa akin na umabot na pala sa P2.3 trillion ang kabuuang utang ng pampublikong sektor.

Hindi na bilyun-bilyon ang usapan ngayon, kundi trilyun-trilyon na.

We know where we are: in an economic slowdown, deep in the Asian crisis.

We know that we don't have much to work with.

Previous leaders have laid down both political and economic reforms that make up an enduring framework from which we can further build.

But we race against time, as an impatient public ask us: When will those reforms pay dividends for the common man?

Well, we just have to begin now. With honesty, with thrift, with efficiency.

Tama na ang pagpapasasa.

Tama na ang nakawan.

Tama na ang aksaya.

Tama na ang mga palabas.

Kailangan magbanat tayo ng mgabuto, at tunay na serbisyo ang siyang dapat na maging balangkas para sa ating mga solusyon. [*Applause*]

Ngayon taon, mula sa inaasahang P93 bilyon, pababa sa P60 bilyon lamang, kailangang magsagawa ng mga kaukulang pagbabago at pagtitipid ang pamahalaan upang lalo pang paliitin ang inaasahang kakulangan nito sa P40 bilyon lamang.

In order to achieve these targets, we will resolutely pursue several major cutbacks in expenditure programs.

First, I have instructed the secretary of the budget to continue to withhold 25 percent of budget allocations, excluding salaries and wages, from the various national agencies, including the Office of the President.

Second, we will continue to withhold 10 percent from the internal revenue allotment of the local government units [LGUs].

Third, I believe that congress shares my conviction that we have to abolish the pork barrel in the face of our fiscal position. [*Applause*] Kakaunti ang mga congressman na pumapalakpak. [*Laughter*] Our people ask no less.

Lastly, I will postpone the implementation this year of various programs earmarked for funding from the military camp sale proceeds, including the AFP modernization program. [*Applause*]

We will also move quickly to dispose of the burden of government-owned corporations. I urge Congress to prioritize the bill privatizing the NAPOCOR within the first three months of the 11th session. Privatization of government shares in Pasar, Philphos, Petron, FTI, PNB, PNOC-EDC, PNCC, Meralco, and the two government-owned television stations will commence this year. The Department of Finance will put in place, within 100 days, a program to spin off or restructure the rest of the government corporations. Ngunit ang mga ospital ng pamahalaan ay kailanman ay hindi natin ibebenta. *[Applause]* At mananatiling susuportahan ng ating pamahalaan.

All dealings, contracts, and negotiations will be done with complete transparency and integrity, every step of the way. *[Applause]*

Any indication of anomaly, I will immediately cancel the sale.

Uulitin ko, isang balita lang tungkol sa katiwalian, ipatitigil ko ang anumang klase ng subasta. Kahit sino pa sila. *[Applause]*

I have ordered an inventory of all government lands titled to departments and bureaus and their transfer to the national government. I want my officials to keep out of the real estate business and stick to public service. *[Applause]*

But let us not forget that privatization is mainly an emergency response to an emergency situation.

It is therefore my intention to initiate institutional reform of the entire budget process. My administration has just completed its first three-year budget framework, which the national government will soon propose to Congress as our budget accord. In contrast to the current practice where only the executive decides on the initial list of programs and projects, the budget accord will involve both Congress and the executive in the selection of projects to be approved by the President. And the total of these expenditures cannot exceed predetermined, irrevocable ceilings over the three-year period. *[Applause]*

Sa panig po naman ng pananalapi, umaasa akong magtatagumpay ang action plan ng Department of Finance upang maging epektibo ang pangongolekta ng buwis.

The action plan of the Department of Finance will start with an asset census, intended to establish an up-to-date and reliable database on the net worth of all tax-paying Filipinos.

We will push for a tax amnesty that will give peace of mind to delinquent taxpayers and tax credits to honest ones. Pagkatapos ng tax amnesty, I will assure you that we will apply the full force of the law against tax evaders. *[Applause]*

Tinitiyak ko sa inyo na hindi lamang natin hahabulin ang mga tax evaders na ito kundi siguradong mapaparusahan, sino man sila. *[Applause]*

We will establish a large taxpayers unit at the BIR. We will suspend the implementation of certain BOI exemptions granted to companies under laws and executive orders that expired in 1997. *[Applause]*

The fiscal reforms forced upon us by the economic crisis will continue to serve us well even after the crisis is over. I will take this opportunity to establish fiscal discipline in the spending habits of government. Although we have to tolerate a certain amount of deficit this year, we will try as best as possible to pursue a balanced budget for the national government in the coming years. The consolidated deficit for the entire public sector will be limited to no more than 1 percent of the country's GNP.

Makikinabang ang lahat sa mga gagawin nating ito: Hindi lamang ang pamahalaan, kundi ang karaniwang mamamayan na rin.

Sa larangan ng ating financial system, patuloy na igagalang ng aking administrasyon ang kalayaan ng ating Monetary Board at ng Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Subali't hindi kailangang magdusa ng lubos ang kalakalan sa patuloy na pagtaas ng interest rates.

Kakatigan ko ang pagbaba ng interest at ang pagpapabilis sa daloy ng pananalapi, lalo na sa mga maliliit na negosyo. Gayunpaman, titiyakin kong ang salapi ng mga government financial institution [GFI] ay hindi sosolohin ng mga iilang korporasyon.

Giant corporations and powerful groups have cornered a huge chunk of the resources of government banks, whose mandate is principally to help agriculture and small and medium enterprises.

This practice will be reversed. Sobra na ang kanilang pagsasamantala. These billionaires have pushed small borrowers to lending windows that charge much higher interest rates. From this time on, GFIs will truly, sincerely, service the common people's needs. *[Applause]*

Ipinamalas din ng kasalukuyang krisis ang peligro ng labis na pag-asa sa mga pondong nagmumula sa labas, kaya't kailangan nating pag-ibayuhin ang sarili nating pag-iipon, nang may sarili tayong pampuhunan sa ating mga proyekto.

Sa dako naman tayo ng agrikultura, na lubhang napabayaan, kaya't ang food security ng 70 milyong Pilipino ay nasa bingit ng alanganin.

The monopoly of rice importation by the National Food Authority has not stabilized prices, nor has it broken the cartels. Two administrations have declared sugar a sunset industry, doomed to die. Maybe. All I know is that, sunset industry or not, I cannot leave three million families who depend on sugar in the dark, with nothing to eat after the sun goes down.

Marahil ang paglubog ng ating agrikultura ay dulot ng kulang na imprastruktura. Hindi sapat ang bilang ng mga daanan na nag-uugnay sa mga bukid at mga pamilihan.

Bakit nga ba magtatanim kung hindi mo naman maibebenta ang iyong inani?

We are condoning irrigation fees. Ibibigay natin ng libre ang patubig sa ating magsasaka. *[Applause]* At the same time, we will launch a full-scale program based on cost-effective irrigation technologies.

Kailangan nating gumawa ng 140,000 kilometro ng mga bagong daan. Magkakahalaga ito ng P484 billion.

Without graft and corruption, this will be money well spent. It could also jumpstart the economy.

Tungkol naman sa ating kapaligiran, ipapairal natin ang ganap na pagbabawal sa pagtotroso o total log ban. *[Applause]* Maglulunsad tayo ng bagong programa sa muling pagtatanim ng mga puno. But not like in the past when massive reforestation was another excuse for massive corruption.

Traffic tells us that we need more roads and we need to finish them faster. One reason for delay of roads and other projects is the issuance of temporary restraining orders or TROs. I will not interfere with the judiciary, but I urge the Supreme Court to remind judges of the lawyer's oath to delay no man for money.

Masyado ng garapal ang bentahan ng temporary restraining order. *[Applause]*

Walang lakas ang mahihirap upang tulungan ang kanilang sarili, ngunit ngayon, kahit ang gobyerno ay kapos sa pondo. So we must strategize to maximize.

Dole-outs are out, but basic social services are only just and right. That means basic health care, basic nutrition, and useful education for those who want it but cannot afford it.

We will speed up the program to establish one science high school in every province. *[Applause]* We will give education subsidies straight to deserving students and teachers without passing through the schools. That way they can choose where to study and where to teach.

Ang lahat ng mga ito ay nangangailangan ng salapi. Sa mga susunod na hakbangin, kailangan lamang natin ang tapang at political will. Nilagdaan ko na ang executive order na lumilikha sa tinaguriang Presidential Task Force against Organized Crime. Bunga nito, katakut-takot na batikos ang ipinukol sa akin.

Isang tanong, isang sagot: Kontra ba tayo sa krimen, o sa mga lumalaban sa krimen? The task force is what I think is needed to hit crime, and hit it hard so as to put it out—decisively. *[Applause]* Maybe there is a better way, but no one has shown me this. They only say that I am wrong but not how I can do it right and effectively.

Sawa na ako sa kanila. Pati na ang mamamayan, sawa na rin. Sawa na sa puro pamumulitika. Sawa na sa puro salita, ngunit wala namang nagagawa kundi laitin ang mga lumalaban sa krimen. Buo na ang aking pasiya. Tuloy ang presidential task force against the criminals.

I propose that Congress amends the Dangerous Drug Act to eliminate the possibility of probation for all offenders. Even if they say they are sorry. The only place for a drug dealer and the addict is together in jail.

I shall propose another controversial measure. I want to devolve greater administrative control over the Philippine National Police to the local government units. *[Applause]* I am sure I will get hit for this also. Perhaps there is a constitutional question here. But one thing is sure, I am not abusing power. What I am doing is sharing some of my power with the local executives over the national police.

Ang pulis na baon sa hiras ay hindi nalalayo sa tukso na mang-abuso. Pero hindi ako nagdududa na gagampanan nang tapat ng mga alagad ng batas ang kanilang tungkulin kahit na gaano pa silang kahirap.

Ngunit bakit pa natin pabibigatin ang kanilang kalagayan? Naniniwala ako na kapag sapat ang sahod ng ating mga alagad ng batas, higit na magiging propesyonal ang ating mga pulisya.

Sa krimen, ang sagot natin ay kaparusahan. Sa rebelyon, ang tugon natin ay negosasyon.

Sa mga nagsisilala, ay tapat lamang ang pagnanasa na makamit ang pagbabago sa lipunan, tayo ay handang makipag-negosasyon.

Subali't sa mga terorista, wala tayong panahon.

Sa mga kapatid nating Muslim, hinihiling ko ang pagkakataon na mabigyan ng katarungan ang napakaraming taon ng kapabayaang. Tigilan natin ang dahas, at pag-ibayuhin ang sandugong kapatiran. Samantalang ang karapatan ng ating mga kababaihan ay patuloy nating itataguyod.

As President, I inherit not only the problems but the responsibility to finish what my predecessors have started. That includes the resolution of ill-gotten wealth cases from the Marcos era. *[Applause]* I will do so. We have talked of settlements but we have not precluded continuing prosecution.

Yet these cases have gone on long enough. Therefore, I order the Presidential Commission on Good Government to go forward on all ill-gotten wealth cases with all the evidence it has taken 12 long years to collect.

No more delays.

One way or another, I want these cases to end in one year, in final judgments or acceptable settlements.

Pagkatapos ng 12 taon, siguro naman may katibayan na upang mabigyan ng katarungan ang sambayanang Pilipino. Ito ang maliwanag na halimbawa ng justice delayed, justice denied.

Sa dakong external security naman. Effective national defense requires not just modern weaponry but better fighting men. Before we spend on expensive hardware, let us have the right kind of soldiers. It is not weapons that win wars but the men who fight them.

Until we develop a credible military deterrent, we must depend on the goodwill of our neighbors, on our treaty commitments with the United States, and on the skills of our diplomats in conveying to everyone that we want only peace, stability, and a shared prosperity.

It is said that my stand as a senator against the U.S. Bases Treaty disqualifies me as President from endorsing the Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States.

On the contrary, because I stood up for the Philippine sovereignty in 1991, now as your President, I have the moral right to stand up for Philippine security today. *[Applause]*

Sa bahagi naman ng pamamahala, itinatag ang pamahalaan upang paglingkuran ang mga mamamayan—at hindi ang kanyang sarili. Kung tutuusin kailangan natin ng higit pang pamamahala—lalo na upang itaguyod ang kapakanan ng mga maralita.

Sa ngayon, labis-labis ang ating pamamahala, subalit kulang na kulang naman ang mga serbisyong pampubliko.

Pakikiusapan ko ang Kongreso na bigyan ako ng kapangyarihan para reorganisahan ang gobyerno upang ito ay maging matipid at masinop. The aim is not to change officials but to rationalize government operations. We are a small country, we should only have a small government. Not only on the national but also on the local level.

Tungkol naman sa ating electoral reforms, hindi lamang halalang mapayapa ang ating kailangan, kundi kampanyang hindi lubhang magastos. Hindi lamang karapatan ng mga mamamayang bumoto ang dapat natin tiyakin; dapat siguruhin natin na ang mga boto nila ay mabibilang.

Upang makamit ito, kailangan bigyan ang Komisyon sa Halalan ng higit pang kapangyarihan upang harangin at parusahan ang lahat ng uri ng pandaraya. Hinihiling ko sa Kongreso na magpatibay ng batas upang gawing heinous crime ang anumang electoral fraud. *[Applause]* Kailangan matapos ang computerization program bago sumapit ang susunod na eleksiyon. Natitiyak kong marami pa tayong magagawa sa ikabubuti ng pangangasiwa ng pamahalaan—ngunit maaring kailangan pang baguhin ang ilang mga alituntunin ng saligang batas. Darating ang panahon ng pagbabago sa ating Saligang Batas.

Mga kagalang-galang ng kinatawan ng sambayanang Pilipino: Hayaan ninyong wakasan ko ang mensaheng ito sa pagsambit ng isang taimtim na pag-asa.

Ngayong taon—sa kabila ng mga mabibigat na suliranin—sumusulong pa rin ang ating ekonomiya.

This year, despite formidable odds, we still expect some economic growth. Our gross national product is targeted to expand this year by 2 to 3 percent. While other countries in the region have registered negative GNP, we continue to have positive growth—this, I would say, is a credit to my predecessor, Former President Ramos. *[Applause]* We believe we can keep inflation based on 1998 prices in the single digits, at around 9.5 percent.

To conclude, my aim is to help our country escape the recession. My solutions are obvious, my proposals may be commonplace, but they were never adapted before.

In sum, they are to spend wisely and less. And by austerity and hard work generate the means to cover the shortfalls of the past, so we can have a smooth runway for a final takeoff.

Perhaps by then, six years will have passed, and someone else will take over as pilot. I am honored enough to be elected to the position of the highest responsibility, power, and trust in the land.

I have neither pretensions nor further ambition, only the sincere desire to serve, to help the least of our people. *[Applause]* Kaya po ako'y humihingi sa inyo ng kaunting pag-unawa, kaunting panahon, kaunting pagtitiis alang-alang sa ating bayan, at higit sa lahat para sa ating nakakaraming mahihirap na mamamayan.

Naniniwala ako na kapag nagawa natin na tayo'y nagkaisa, tayo'y nagkasama-sama, lahat ng klaseng pagsubok ay malalampasan natin. Nandiyan din ang ating hamon; nandiyan din ang ating tagumpay.

Maraming, maraming salamat po. *[Applause]* *[Standing ovation]*

Joseph Ejercito Estrada, Second State of the Nation Address, July 26, 1999

**Second State of the Nation Address
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines**

[Delivered at the Batasang Pambansa, Quezon City, on July 26, 1999]

“A Poverty-Free Philippines”

I, Joseph Ejercito Estrada, President of the Republic of the Philippines, with the nation, the world, and God as my witness, do hereby reaffirm my unwavering commitment to democracy. *[Applause]*

I stand by my solemn oath to defend the Constitution. As President, I will always uphold freedom in all its various forms; including the freedom of speech, of the press, of worship, of assembly, and of choice. *[Applause]* None of these freedoms are under threat.

Those who fear the loss of freedom do not share my faith in the strength of our Constitution, in the sturdiness of our institutions, in the passion of our people to preserve their freedom, and in their determination and power to defend it. Freedom may have been lost before. It will never be lost again. *[Applause]* Our people will see to that. I as president will stake my own life on it. *[Applause]*

Yet may I remind our people that liberty without responsibility is license, that freedom does not confer the right to violate the law or the rights of others, that freedom without responsibility is the formula for chaos, anarchy, and lawlessness.

The paranoid will take that last statement as a hidden threat. The rest will see it as a self-evident principle, accepted throughout the ages, and needing neither apology nor defense. Yet, given a choice between freedom and restraint, I will choose to err on the side of freedom. *[Applause]*

To paraphrase Voltaire: I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it. But that does not mean I waive the right to argue with you! That is as much my constitutional right as it is yours.

Let all doubts be erased. Democracy, freedom, and the Constitution are alive and well in this country. *[Applause]*

Now, to other issues.

Although I am blessed with many friends, I have no cronies. *[Applause]*

I have turned down, and will continue to turn down, all requests for a government bailout of financially strapped companies, as I did in the case of Philippine Airlines, owned by Mr. Lucio Tan. *[Applause]*

The sequestered shares of Mr. Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. in San Miguel Corporation are under litigation and will stay as such until the case is resolved. There is no deal involved here with Mr. Cojuangco.

The extradition process involving Mr. Mark Jimenez will proceed in accordance with the due process of law, without obstruction.

There are no secret deals with the Marcoses.

I hope this answers your immediate concerns.

Ngayon, handa na ba kayong makinig sa akin? *[Applause]*

Ako'y nagagalak ipahayag sa inyo na ang ating bansa ay nakaahon na sa krisis ng Asia.

Ito ang isa sa maraming dahilan kung bakit dapat natin ipagdiwang ang unang kaarawan ng aking administrasyon.

Sa aking inagurasyon sa Luneta noong ika-30 ng Hunyo 1998, mahigpit kong iginiit na "Huwag n'yo akong susubukan!" *[Applause]* Nguni't ang sumubok sa akin ay hindi ang taong-bayan kundi ang matinding bagyo na tumama sa ating ekonomiya.

Nang ako'y hinirang na maging kapitan ng barko ng ating sambayanan, ito ay kasalukuyang palubog na sa maalong dagat ng Asian crisis. Sabi ko sa aking sarili: ang ganda naman ng timing ng aking pagsakay. Hinahampas ng hangin at alon ang barko. At lalong masama, kakaunti na lang ang gasolina ng kanyang tangke. Paano natin ngayon dadalhin ang barkong ito sa ligtas na lugar hanggang makalipas ang malupit na panahon?

Mabuti na lamang, ang aming team ng mga kilalang dalubhasa sa kanya-kanyang linya ay nagkaisa sa pagpapasya kung paano lulutasin ang mga problema na ating hinaharap noon. Sa pamamagitan ng aming pagtutulungan, pagsisikap, at mga tamang pamamalakad, napaayos namin ang paggalaw ng barko. Nang sumikat ang araw, ang karamihan ng mga ibang barko ay nakalubog pa rin at nagsisikap pang umahon, ngunit ang barko ng Pilipinas ay nakalutang na sa liwanag ng araw.

Ngayon, marami na ang nakakargang gasolina sa ating barkong Pilipinas, dahil nais nilang sumama sa ating paglakbay sa darating na milenio. Malayo na ang kaya nating maabot. Kaya tayo ay susulong na ngayon!

Today, I fulfill my Constitutional mandate to address Congress on the first day of its regular session. By tradition, I am to dwell on the State of the Nation.

Let me start with a sincere apology to all those who expected or wished to see me fail. I am sorry to disappoint them. *[Applause]*

I am pleased to report that our nation is rising, growing, and strengthening. This is in contrast to the situation I described to you last year, and which I vowed to reverse. Ako'y natutuwang ipahayag na ang ating bayan ay umaangat, umuunlad, at lumalakas. Ito ay kabaligtaran ng kalagayan ng ating ekonomiya na aking binigkas dito noong nakaraang taon. Nakaraan na ang krisis ng ekonomiya.

Last year, when I first addressed this august body, our nation was in an economic crisis. Today, we are out of it.

Last year, I told you that our aim was to help the country escape the recession. We did it.

In 1998, most of our Asian neighbors sank into recession. In contrast, our country managed a modest but positive growth of one-tenth of one percent [0.1%] in our gross national product [GNP]. However, our gross domestic product [GDP] dipped by one-half of one percent [0.5%] during the year. In the first quarter of this year, our GNP abruptly surged upward by 2% and our GDP by 1.2%. Last year, we were struggling to keep ourselves from sinking. Today, we are sailing towards the high seas again.

It is time once more to pay tribute to a special class of Filipinos: our overseas workers. They as a group kept our GNP growth at positive rates even during the worst of times. They continue to be our economic saviors.

Last year, I expressed my hope of keeping inflation at a single-digit rate. We did it.

In 1998, the inflation rate was at a full-year average of 9.7%. It improved further to a six-month average of 8.4% in the first half of 1999. In June alone, inflation was down to 5.8%. Inflation is a vicious enemy of the poor.

Last year, I said that without undermining the independence of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, we would support the lowering of interest rates. We did it.

In the past 12-month period alone, the benchmark 91-day Treasury bill rate dropped steeply from 14.9% on the first auction on July 6, 1998, to 8.4% last Monday. This is its lowest level in more than 12 years. Bank lending rates have also dropped to pre-crisis levels.

Last year, I lamented the devaluation of the peso as imposing burdens on our people. I inferred that we should strengthen our currency. We did it.

At the beginning of 1998, the peso plunged to an all-time low of P45.42 to \$1. At the beginning of my administration, it was at P42.04. Since then, the peso has strengthened dramatically. It has stabilized within a range of P37 to P39 to the dollar. This was achieved largely by leaving the market alone. And the market responded with a show of confidence: it sent billions of dollars of loans, investments, and export orders to the Philippines. The Bangko Sentral intervened only occasionally to prevent wild swings and to forestall speculative attacks, not to set the trends or levels of the exchange rate.

Last year, I committed to more effective and efficient tax collection. We did it.

Despite the ravages of the Asian crisis on tax collections, total revenues amounted to P462 billion in 1998, of which tax revenues constituted P416 billion, or P4 billion higher than in 1997. For the first four months of 1999, BIR collections reached P126 billion, or 3.2% higher than in 1998. Customs collections amounted to P23.1 billion, and nontax revenues, P14.1 billion.

This does not mean that we are happy with our tax effort. We need to improve not only our collection performance but the tax structure itself, and hence our existing tax laws.

Last year, we found the government in a deeper fiscal hole than the public had been made to believe. We committed to reduce the government deficit. This time, we didn't do it.

It is not that we failed. We deliberately shifted course.

At a time when the economy was threatened by recession, the previous administration had decided on a 25% across-the-board forced savings on the expenditures of the government. This was like administering the medicine for high blood pressure to a patient with low blood pressure. *Lalong lulubha ang pasyente, at baka mamatay ng hindi oras.* (That is why my favorite doctor, The First Lady, always makes sure that my blood pressure is normal, especially when I'm reading the newspapers.) [*Laughter*] [*Applause*]

We scrapped the forced cutbacks and did exactly the opposite. We not only ensured that public services would continue at adequate levels; we also engaged in various pump-priming. Our aim was not to save but to spend. This was to counteract the slowdown in private consumption and investment expenditures. In other words, to raise the country's declining blood pressure rather than let it sink further.

Our logic was simple. A time of growth and threats of inflation calls for balanced budgets or surpluses to prevent further inflation. But a time of recession and deflation calls for budget deficits to jumpstart a recovery.

Thus, towards the end of 1998, we increased the budget deficit to P50 billion, or 1.8% of the GNP. For the first time, and for the first five months of 1999, we incurred, as planned, a deficit of P45.3 Billion, still within the 1999 programmed deficit of P68.4 billion (or 2.2% of target GNP). For the next two years, we intend to reduce our deficit to 1.1% and 0.4% of GNP, and eventually attain a balanced budget in the year 2002 and surpluses thereafter. In other words, I will not end my term with a deficit. [*Applause*]

One problem we faced was how to finance the deficit. Borrowing locally would have raised interest rates at a time when we wanted them to go down. Borrowing abroad was too costly. Monetary expansion would have triggered inflation and a run on the peso. Foreign exchange controls were untenable. Raising taxes or cutting government expenditures would have led to a deep recession.

It seemed like there was no way out. But we found one anyway. Substantial funds were located right under our noses—the Foreign Currency Deposit Units, or FCDUs—so we borrowed from them, on a short-term basis, at relatively low cost.

As a result, we brought down interest rates. We brought down the inflation rate. And we strengthened the peso. Experts say these all cannot happen at the same time because they are inconsistent with one another. But we did it. And we emerged out of the regional crisis ahead of most of our neighbors.

I narrate all these “inside stories” to make a point. Those who make a career and a business out of hitting me are saying that the improvement in the country’s economic performance was due to pure luck, to good weather, or to anything but Erap. Tsamba lang daw. Sa madali’t salita, kung gumaganda ang takbo ng ekonomiya, walang kinalaman si Erap. Ngunit kung bumagsak ang ekonomiya, kasalanan ni Erap. Mali naman yata iyan. Our recovery was due to the innovative way we analyzed situations and made bold decisions.

Our success was the result of effective governance. It was a matter of having the right policies, being supported by competent and dedicated cabinet members, respecting the freedom of the market, managing and budgeting our resources right, and acting quickly before the danger grew or the opportunity disappeared.

As a prominent Filipino economist, Dr. Bernardo Villegas, recently wrote—and I quote—”The economic team of the present administration during its first year has been superior in cohesiveness, effectiveness, and clarity in purpose when compared to the equivalent teams during the first years of [the previous administrations] ... President Estrada’s first economic team is among the best in Asia.” [End of quote]

Effective governance by a team-powered administration also explains the rapid recovery of the country’s international credit standing. I am sure you know the definition of a banker: He is a person who lends you his umbrella when it stops raining. Credit markets are even more jittery.

So when the global market gobbles up \$1.2 billion worth of the Republic of the Philippines Global Bonds for budget support, from the first country to float such an issue after the Asian crisis; and when the market buys up the \$400 million of Bangko Sentral bonds issued for reserve management purposes; and when the Eurobond flotation of the national government raises \$383 million—the world believes that in the Philippines, it has stopped raining. We are getting a shower of umbrellas!

This is not to mention the billions of dollars of inflows in medium- and long-term loans from bilateral sources, banks, and financial institutions; from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank; from Japan’s Export-Import Bank and Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund; and from the International Monetary Fund, among others.

Isa pang tanda ng pagbangon ng ating ekonomiya ay ang pagbaba ng unemployment rate mula 13.3% noong Abril nang nakaraang taon hanggang 11.8% nitong nakaraang Abril dahil sa 1.6 million bagong trabahong nalika. Gagawin namin ang lahat para ibaba ang unemployment rate sa less than 10% sa susunod na taon at sa around 6.7% bago magtapos ang aking administrasyon. [Applause] Ang ating target ay makalikha nang mula sa 6 million hanggang 6.4 million trabaho sa buong panahon ng akng panunungkulan. [Applause]

In the meantime, our exports are zooming up at double-digit rates, our balance of current accounts are in surplus, and our gross international reserves are at all-time highs, currently amounting to \$14 billion.

With all these developments, it is no wonder that in the space of only one year, the other Asian countries and, indeed, much of the world, have come to recognize the presidency of the Philippines as among the leaders of the

region. This is indeed a long way from the skepticism that greeted this presidency when it began. In APEC, in ASEAN, and in other regional and international forums, the current leadership of the Philippines enjoys a high level of respect. Our international prestige is on the rise. The dramatic rebound in the stock market is a strong indication of confidence. And the people, according to the latest surveys, give the president a 77.6% approval rating.

The heads of the IMF and the World Bank also have had good words to say. Mr. James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, said—and I quote—“What is clear is the Philippine situation is vastly different from Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia ... I think you all know you are weakened far less than anyone else in the region with the exception of Singapore.” End of quote. And Mr. Michel Camdessus, managing director of the IMF, said he considered the Philippines as a model for countries in the ASEAN region.

Only last Thursday, the IMF Executive Board completed the fourth review under our standby arrangement. This will now allow us to draw about \$214 million, which will further increase our gross international reserves. The IMF executive directors also praised the Bangko Sentral, headed by Governor Gabriel Singson, for the successful implementation of monetary policy through the turbulence of the past two years.

It is ironic that while foreign experts and the foreign press give good reviews of our performance, and while investors pour money into our economy, some quarters in our local media are undermining confidence in our country. Samantalang ang mga dayuhang ekonomista at manunulat ay pinupuri ang pag-ahon ng ating ekonomiya, ang ilan naman sa ating mga peryodista ay siyang unang sumisira dito ng walang basehan.

In the past year, the main imperative that faced us was to survive the crisis. Now, we turn to pursuing our vision.

There are those, in fact, who say that we have no vision. They claim, for example, that we have no programs to fight poverty: the central pledge of my campaign. They are wrong. It is not the government that is lacking in programs. It is our critics who are lacking in perception. It is not I who has no vision. It is they who have no insight.

I consider poverty an intolerable social shame. It cries out not for marginal attention but for a total approach. For me, the war on poverty is not just a policy but a passion. I deplore the fact that the past economic programs of this country were mostly upside-down. Baligtad. They aimed at developing the apex and neglected the base.

My own belief is the opposite. Uplifting the rich leaves the poor behind. But uplifting the poor lifts everyone, including the rich.

Let me make this clear. My vision is not just the alleviation of poverty but its ultimate eradication. Alleviation is temporary. Eradication is permanent. Alleviation is limited. Eradication is total. The proper response to the problem of poverty is not superficial treatment but total structural change. Hindi maaring puksain ang kahirapan sa pamamagitan ng patapal-tapal at papahid-pahid lamang. Kailangan ay baguhin ang buong sistema.

I realize that “eradication” is unattainable in real life. But getting as close to it as possible is worth the effort. It is true that Jesus Christ said: “The poor you will always have with you,” but he did not say they had to be the majority. My vision is to drive poverty away from the center and into the periphery of our concerns, to make it a marginal rather than a mainstream problem.

Hence, our war on poverty is not just one program of government. It is the overriding business of the government itself. It is built into and embedded in our total economic and social programs. It defines and drives the substance, the content, and the heart and soul of our entire strategy of government.

Ang ating kampanya laban sa kahirapan ay hindi isang programa lamang ng pamahalaan. Ito ang sentro ng patakaran at pagkilos ng pamahalaan. Nakatatak ito sa kabuuan ng bawat programang pangkabuhayan at panlipunan. Ito ang magbibigay-buhay at lakas sa diwa at puso ng pagkilos at pamamalakad ng pamahalaan.

It is essential for our war on poverty that the economy develop in general, but this is not enough. It is also important that development efforts be redirected towards the poor, towards the base of our society. In my 30 years of public service, I have always decided for the greater good of the greatest number. With this conviction, I can never go wrong.

For example, our war on poverty is in the fundamental and strategic shift of focus of the government towards agriculture and the development of the rural areas, where two-thirds of our poor people live.

Ang ating pagkilos para maging moderno ang ating agrikultura—para tumaas ang ani ng ating mga bukirin at pangingsda at dumami ang mga industriya sa kanayunan—ay isang paraang hindi pa nasubukang gawin ng alin mang administrasyon. Nakapaloob dito ang paglalaan ng sapat na pondo para sa produksiyon ng pagkain, food security, irigasyon, farm-to-market roads, at postharvest facilities. Nitong nakaraang taon, nabigyan natin ng patubig ang mahigit 20,000 ektarya ng lupa at nakapagtayo tayo ng 250 kilometro ng farm-to-market roads. Sisiguruhin nating makakuha ng tulong pinansyal ang ating mga magsasaka, mangingsda, at maliliit na negosyante. Palalawakin natin ang mga lupang sakop ng irigasyon mula 47.2% noong 1998 hanggang 63% sa taong 2004.

This past year, we laid the foundation for the full implementation of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act. This law aims at transforming our agriculture and fisheries into technologically advanced and globally competitive sectors. Recently, I ordered that the importation of equipment, machinery, fertilizers, and other inputs of agriculture be allowed at zero tariff, as authorized by this law. [Applause] This coming year, our proposed budget will provide a P21.8 billion fund to support the implementation of this act.

Our war on poverty is also in the emphasis on expanding the linkages between farms and markets, and between rural and urban areas, through roads, power, transport, telecommunications, and other infrastructure. Last year, we built or upgraded 582 kilometers of roads and 10,069 lineal meters of bridges. We provided electricity to 1,221 barangays. We installed 165,000 new telephone lines. Our target is to see 100% of our national arterial roads paved and 100% of our bridges made permanent by the end of my term. We will upgrade our ports to international standards, and develop 36 feeder ports.

Our war on poverty is in the acceleration of the land redistribution processes under the agrarian reform program. We distributed more than 266,000 hectares of land to 175,000 landless farmers, including land owned by the traditional rural elite. [Applause]

Our war on poverty is in the restructuring of our health programs to lower the price of medicines and to provide preferential attention to the indigents.

It is also in the highly augmented flow of budgetary funds to the local government units [LGUs]. As a single recipient unit, LGUs will get a total of P131.2 billion, or 20.1%, of the P651 billion budget we will propose.

Our war on poverty is in the massive portion of our budget—amounting to P118 billion for the year 2000—that we give to education and to the programs we are undertaking to meet our increasing need for classrooms, desks, books, and teachers. Our longer-term aim is to increase the overall standards of excellence of our entire educational system.

Our war on poverty is in our initiatives to provide more resources for socialized housing for the poor. From July 1998 to March 1999, we provided 127,886 units of housing assistance which benefited some 74,000 households. We intend to provide decent housing for our teachers, policemen, and soldiers.

Our war on poverty is in the provision of more resources and revitalized programs to uplift and improve the welfare of women, the youth, the indigenous communities, the disabled, and the elderly, and other disadvantaged sectors of our society.

Our war on poverty is in our program to moderate the growth of the population, which is presently the highest in Southeast Asia. It is in our efforts to protect the environment to ensure that our development is sustainable. One landmark achievement here is the passage by Congress of the Clean Air Act.

Our war on poverty is invading even the capital market. It is in the issuance of small-denominated government bonds that allow small savers to contribute to national development while earning interest at higher rates than the banks would pay them.

We will propose certain changes in our tax laws to make our financial markets more efficient and to bring down transaction costs. The documentary stamp tax on quick-turnover transactions will be abolished. The gross receipts tax on banks and financial institutions will be removed to reduce intermediation costs. And the availment of write-offs on loan loss reserves will be accelerated.

Our war on poverty is particularly intense in the obsessive efforts of the government to promote and encourage investments, both domestic and foreign. Here, another basic pro-poor shift is taking place. We are reorienting our preferences towards industries, enterprises, and technologies that employ people as against those that require capital. This is only logical, considering that we are a labor-abundant and a capital-short country. Small- and medium-scale industries will take centerstage. One of our important thrusts is a program called DRIVE, or Developing Rural Industries and Village Enterprises.

All these shifts will take place in a free market environment. All investments in industries, whether large or small, upstream or downstream, capital- or labor-intensive, will be welcome. But special attention will be placed on “unblocking” investments in small- and medium-scale industries, especially in the rural areas. There are many obstacles in our laws and in our landscape that impede the spontaneous flow of investments and technology into these industries. These obstacles will be removed by programs that will open up and make markets more efficient: whether by legislation, by policy and regulation revamps, by focused infrastructure construction, or by other means.

Investments create jobs. And jobs provide both income and dignity. They are the decisive eliminators of poverty.

Our war on poverty is in our programs to enable our industries to achieve global competitiveness. We will transform the power sector to a market-based, competitive industry in order to lower the costs of power. The Omnibus Power Bill is necessary to achieve this. We will exploit our competitive advantage in high-tech industries. Our science and technology policies are being reoriented towards satisfying the needs of the underprivileged.

Let us face up to the fact that certain provisions in our present Constitution are obsolete and serve as deterrents to our global competitiveness. In the race with the rest of the world market to the coming millennium, we cannot afford to let our Constitution bind our feet. *[Applause]*

It is now time for us to identify which parts need to be improved. Some are economic; they should be made effective as soon as possible. Some are political; they should be rewritten in a way that will not allow the incumbent officials to benefit from them. *[Applause]* Changing the Constitution is not about extending the terms of office of incumbents.

But let us not allow our paranoid fears to block the convening of an appropriate assembly or convention to rewrite our charter. Let us not prejudge its outcome. Our citizens can always make their voices heard during the amendment process. And ultimately, they will exercise the power, in a plebiscite, to ratify the new charter or to reject it.

Our Constitution must be made to adapt to the dynamics and imperatives of global realities.

Even our relationships with foreign lands are linked to developing our hinterlands. Our foreign policy is based on three pillars: the preservation of our territorial integrity and national security, the promotion of development through economic diplomacy, and the protection of the rights and welfare of our overseas nationals. Our participation, and

leadership roles, in ASEAN, APEC, ASEM, the UN, and other forums are aimed at promoting stability, peace, free and fair trade, and other beneficial arrangements for the country, the region, and the world.

Our war on poverty is good economics. Its success will benefit the middle and upper classes as well. The more incomes the poor earn, the greater the domestic market for business. The more capable the poor are, the greater the supply of manpower needed by business.

Gaya ng sinabi ko kanina, kung iaangat natin ang mayayaman, ang mahihirap ay maiiwan. Ngunit kung iaangat natin ang mahihirap, ang lahat ay aangat.

I do not presume that we will reduce poverty during my term from a major to a marginal problem. But we do aspire to reduce it substantially: from an incidence of over 32% today to a range of 25% to 28% by 2004. In other words, we seek to lift more than 3.9 million Filipinos out of poverty during my term. We also hope to lay the foundations and launch the initiatives that will make the process irreversible even beyond my term.

However, as eradication proceeds, alleviation continues. As the cancer is being removed, its pains are being relieved. Alleviation takes many forms, including social welfare services, assistance for street children, senior citizens welfare programs, relief from disasters, resettlements, and help for the disabled and the disadvantaged.

Isa pang bahagi ng ating kampanya laban sa kahirapan ay ang isaayos ang pamamalakad ng pamahalaan. Ang hangad natin ay mabawasan ang aksaya at madagdagan ang serbisyong tinatanggap ng ating mga mamamayan. Unang-una na rito ang pagsugpo sa graft and corruption. Ang bawat pisong nawawala sa anomalya ay pisong ninanakaw mula sa mahihirap. Ninanakaw ng mga nagsasamantala ang mga pakinabang na sana'y mapupunta sa mga taongbayan tulad ng mas maraming eskwelahan, mas maraming libro, mas maraming kalye, mas murang gamot, at mas maraming pasilidad sa pag-utang.

It is also time to put the so-called Marcos wealth in the service of the economy, of the people, and particularly of the poor. Twelve years are enough time to know the difference between the ideal and the feasible. It is also more than enough time to place evidence entirely out of reach of even the most diligent discovery efforts.

We do not know the size of the Marcos wealth. And no judgment has ever been rendered that any of it is ill-gotten. Shall we wait forever?

The more we wait, the more the returns on their wealth accrue to the Marcoses and the foreign banks, and none to the Filipino people. The earlier we acquire a substantial part of it, the sooner the returns accrue to the country.

Any transfers of the Marcos wealth will augment the country's resources for fighting poverty.

Ang isa pang balakid sa digmaan laban sa karalitaan, at sa kaunlaran ng buong bayan, ay ang rebelyon ng ilan sa ating mga kababayan. Sila'y matagal nang iniwan ng kanilang mga lider upang magpasarap sa ibang bansa, at doon nila tinutulak ang "insurgency by remote control."

Ako'y nakikiusap sa mga rebeldeng naiwan dito. Hindi tayo magkalaban. Kung ang layunin ninyo ay ang kapakanan ng masa, heto ang masasabi ko sa inyo: Laging kasama ninyo si Erap sa pagmamalasakit sa masa. Kailanman ay hindi ko kayo iiwanan. Kaya magsamasama na tayo.

Hinahangad namin ang kapayapaan. Sa halip ng pag-uusap sa ibang bansa o "neutral territory," ilagay natin ang peace process sa tamang lugar: sa community level. The Local Peace Forum, where established, are addressing directly the issues and concerns on the ground which are considered the causes of insurgency.

Ngunit mabuti na ring maliwanag ang usapan. Kuwentas klaras. Kakaunti na lang ang panahon at pasiyensiya na nalalabi sa pagdadada. Isuko na ninyo ang inyong armas. Bumalik na kayo sa buklod ng batas at ng ating lipunan, At dito tayo mag-usap ng masinsinan, bilang magkakapatid, walang sandata sa kamay, walang tutukan ng baril.

Our people overwhelmingly support our constitutional system and our functioning democracy. No insurgency of any color has the legal, political, or moral right to seek to bring it down.

This government was elected by the people. It enjoys their support. Your rebellion does not. And this government was not elected to compromise the sovereignty of this Republic, not in substance, not in symbol, not ever.

If you wish to run the government, seek the people's mandate. If you have any grievances against the government or against society, seek your redress within the law. You have a right to your beliefs, but you cannot justify your belligerence.

Peace we offer to you, but appeasement, never. It is the weak that offers appeasement to the strong, not vice versa. Do not doubt our resolve. We will welcome you back at any time. But we will give your rebellion no air to breathe, no space to move, no time to prosper. If you accept peace, you will have it. If you do not, we will force it anyway.

The rebellion, we must crush. *[Applause]* The rebels, we must save, unless they persist in their rebellion. Those who refuse to be saved will invite the full force of our laws and the full might of our forces.

Hindi binebeybi ang rebelyon. Pinipisa. *[Laughter]* *[Applause]* Kaya, huwag n'yo kaming hamunin!

Gayon din ang masasabi ko tungkol sa krimen at mga salarin. Hindi nilalambing ang krimen. Dinudurog. Hindi kinukupkop ang kriminal. Pinaparusahan. Lalung-lalo na iyong mga nagtutulak ng bawal na gamot sa ating mga kababayan. *[Applause]* Sitenta porsiyento ng krimen ay nagmumula sa paggamit ng droga. I am happy to report, however, that our efforts at fighting crime have resulted in remarkable reductions in criminal activity, thanks to the vigilance of our crime-fighting agencies at all levels. still, one crime committed is one crime too many.

Our initiatives to bring about stability in Mindanao are directly related to poverty elimination. We will build up Mindanao as the country's food basket. *[Applause]* But we can only succeed if an environment of political tranquility is established there. The proposed plebiscite on the expansion of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao and the subsequent elections are large steps towards stability in that all-important island.

To assure internal and external security, and to preserve the environment of stability the country needs to prosper, we will pursue the 15-year modernization program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. *[Applause]* We intend to make our military and police forces among the most modern in the region.

That is the vision. That is the strategy. But as one famous architect said, "god is in the details." The concrete specifics that will make our vision real are contained in the array of plans, programs, and projects to be implemented in the next five years by various government departments, agencies, and corporations, and by local government units.

I cannot in this address enumerate them all. They will be presented in more detail, first, in our forthcoming "Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan for 1999 to 2004," which we will call "Angat Pinoy 2004"; second, in the P621 billion budget for the year 2000, which I am submitting to Congress today; and third, in our legislative agenda. The list of our proposed bills will also be submitted to Congress today, together with the printed version of this address.

I earnestly ask our legislators to support us by passing these bills, and by harmonizing every appropriations act they will pass with "Angat Pinoy 2004."

Our vision is coherent and clear. I wonder why some observers fail to perceive it. Please don't get shocked if I quote from the scriptures; I believe the answer is there—and I quote: "They look but do not see, and hear but do not listen." End of quote. By the way, that was from Matthew.

The English author, George Moore, was right when he said—and I quote—”The lot of critics is to be remembered by what they failed to understand.” End of quote.

We have gone a long way, but with the help of many. The local government units at all levels are indispensable partners in the strengthening of our economy and our society. The nongovernmental organizations and people’s organizations are helping to deepen and expand the foundations of our development on the ground. The private sector—whether engaged in business, education, health, and other forms of services—have been a principal source of energy for our survival, recovery, and growth.

And of course, I wish to express my appreciation for the contribution and support of Congress. I can only hope that the productivity of the legislative process will multiply in this coming session. Your powers and ours may be separate, as mandated by the Constitution, but our concern for our people should converge.

To sum up: We have emerged from the Asian crisis. We are now in pursuit of our vision of a prosperous and a poverty-free Philippines. The future is for us to shape.

The conditions are positive. Our exports are surging up. Our rice and corn harvests are bountiful. Our banking system is among the strongest in Asia. The peso is stable. Interest rates are low and inflation is low. The figures for the second quarter are not yet out, but I am confident that our GNP will grow by at least 2.4% and our GDP by at least 2%.

Our markets are freer, our institutions stronger, our policies more supportive of growth, our people better prepared than ever.

We are now poised to fly and—as we used to say in the old school—fly high. The skies are there for us to conquer. All we need is to unite.

As to those who continue to distract me from pursuing my vision, I take my cue from Abraham Lincoln, who said—and I quote—”If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what’s said against me won’t amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.” End of quote.

According to the surveys, millions of Filipinos are saying I am right. Between Lincoln’s ten angels and the millions of my own countrymen, I choose to believe my countrymen. *[Applause]*

Sa ngayon, ang ating ekonomiya ay unti-unti nang nakakaahon. Ngunit marami pang hamon ang hinaharap ng ating bansa ngayon at sa darating na siglo. Malawak at malalim ang mga programang dapat natin ipatupad upang maiangat sa kahirapan ang karamihan sa ating mga kababayan.

Alam ko na sa bawat kilos at hakbang na aking gagawin ay magiging matindi ang mga paninira, ang mga batikos, ang mga insulto, at mga paratang. Ngunit ang isasagot ko sa kanila ay marangal at matapat na paninilbihan dahil ang aking pakikilingan ay ang daing ng higit na nakakarami, at hindi ang ingay ng iilang may pansariling interes. *[Applause]* Para sa akin, ito ang mabigat na hamon sapagka’t ang kapalit nito ay ang kinabukasan ng ating lipunan.

Muli, ako’y nananawagan sa lahat ng ating mga kababayan na tayo ay magkaisa at magsikap para sa ating kaunlaran, katahimikan, at magandang kinabukasan.

Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat! *[Applause]* *[Standing ovation]*

**Joseph Ejercito Estrada, Third State of the Nation Address, July 24, 2000 Third State of the Nation Address
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
To the Congress of the Philippines**

[Delivered at Batasang Pambansa, Quezon City, July 24, 2000]

“Toward New Beginnings”

Thank you very much.

Our Honorable Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; Honorable Senate President Franklin Drilon; Honorable House Speaker Manuel Villar Jr.; Honorable Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr.; Former President Fidel V. Ramos; excellencies from the diplomatic corps led by Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Archbishop Antonio Franco; our Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Angelo T. Reyes and commanding generals of the Armed Forces major services; honorable members of the 11th Congress; honorable members of the Cabinet; honorable local executives; other distinguished guests; my coworkers in government; First Lady Dra. Loi; mga minamahal kong mga kababayan:

This is the first opening session of Congress and my first State of the Nation Address to be held in the third millennium and in the 21st century. It is obviously an auspicious occasion for new beginnings.

It should be a new beginning for Mindanao, a new beginning for the economy, a new beginning for integrity in government, and a new beginning for the country. It will also be a new beginning for the presidency.

To begin with, we will write a new history for Mindanao. We will rectify centuries of historical wrongs committed by successive colonial powers, and decades of inequity committed by successive Philippine governments.

Mindanao has traditionally been called the *Land of Promise*. This romantic name has always been a one-way affair. The rest of the country has always expected Mindanao to fulfill its promises to them. It is now time for the rest of the country to fulfill its promises to Mindanao. [*Applause*] We should now convert Mindanao into the *Land of Fulfillment*.

Let us not forget that Mindanao is an integral and organic part of the Philippines. It has been so for the past four and a half centuries. It is so today, it will be so forever.

This is why the government had to neutralize the attempt of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front [MILF] to amputate the southern parts of the country away from the organic whole and to convert them into an independent Muslim state. They were winning their war of territorial encroachment simply because the previous administration refused to fight, pretending that it wasn't happening. In fact, the MILF had already occupied and hoisted their flag over large territories in Mindanao—in at least 46 camps—under the nose of the preceding administration, which was either naive enough to tolerate them or too timid to stop them.

In contrast, my government was decisive enough to expel them. As President, I could not just stand by while the rebels ate up more and more of the country's territory they were not elected to govern. When I took office, I swore to preserve and defend the Constitution. It was my solemn duty under that Constitution to repel the armed rebellion and to defend the sovereignty and integrity of this republic. [*Applause*]

The MILF could not be talked out of their position, whether territorial or ideological. They said that their goal of secession was nonnegotiable. Well, neither is the sovereignty and integrity of the republic. No one can challenge that proposition by force of arms and get away with it.

It would have been quieter if the conflict could be resolved by an exchange of words rather than by an exchange of fire. But whenever words were tried in the past, in the name of so-called peace but which in reality was appeasement, the rebels simply used the peace talks as an opportunity for arms buildup, for troop recruitment and training, for deployment, for territorial consolidation, and for enlarging their threat to the republic.

There would have been a larger space for tolerance if they had pushed their cause in the open marketplace for ideas. But instead, they built up an army and used their firepower to force their separatist aims on our unwilling people.

True to form, the MILF took advantage of the 1997 ceasefire to commit at least 227 violations. These include the kidnapping of Father Luciano Benedetti in September 1998; the occupying and setting on fire of the municipal hall of Talayan, Maguindanao; the takeover of the Kauswagan Municipal Hall; the bombing of the Lady of Mediatrix boat at Ozamiz City; and the takeover of the Narciso Ramos Highway. By doing so, they inflicted severe damage on the country's image abroad, and scared much-needed investments away.

The numerous camps they maintained were not Boy Scout camps. They were staging areas and launching pads for expanding the MILF rebellion further. These military camps were not under the command and control of the government of the Republic of the Philippines. They owed their allegiance elsewhere.

Given all these, plus the unabated murders, terrorism, abuses, extortion, bombings, illegal control of buildings and public highways, and other atrocities committed by the rebels in the pursuit of their secessionist aims, the government was faced with two choices. One was to play the sucker, keep talking and let the problems grow until the republic was in real mortal danger. The other was to meet force with force. An armed rebellion demanded an armed response. The sitting-duck strategy has never been known to work well ... for the duck.

In order to ensure permanent peace in the future, we had to demolish the rebels' apparatus for making war. Moreover, abstention from military action would have meant political abdication.

In effect, we did not choose the military option. It was forced upon us. But we used it. And we succeeded.

The retaking of these territories was not just a symbolic victory but a substantive one. We upheld the constitutional principle that the Philippines is one state, one republic, with one government, one military answerable to one civilian Commander in Chief, under one Constitution and one flag, in one undivided territory. That is what it is now. That is what it will be forever.

Ang buong bansa ay nagpupugay sa kagitingan ng mga opisyal at mga kawani ng ating Sandatahang Lakas ng Pilipinas sa pamumuno ng ating kalihim ng Department of National Defense at ng ating Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Kasama ng ating mga field commanders, tinupad nila ng buong katapatan at katapangan ang kanilang tungkulin sa ating pagsakop ng mga kampo ng MILF. Let the whole country salute the Filipino soldiers who valiantly and bravely fought the rebels in defense of the sovereignty, integrity, and honor of the Republic of the Philippines. *[Applause]* Let the whole country pay tribute, in particular, to those who gave up their lives or were injured fighting to preserve the unity of their motherland. Sila ay nakadagdag sa hanay ng ating mga bagong bayani.

Ngunit ang buong lipunan ay nakikiramay din sa mga mahal sa buhay ng mga nasawi, sa hanay ng dalawang puwersa, sibilyan man o mga sundalo. Nakikidalamhati tayo doon sa mga nasaktan at napinsala ng kaguluhang ito.

Now that we have won the war, it is time to win the peace. Toward this end, the government has adopted a four-point strategy in approaching the Mindanao question from hereon.

- The first is to restore and maintain peace in Mindanao—because without peace, there can be no development.
- The second is to develop Mindanao—because without development, there can be no peace.
- The third is to continue seeking peace talks with the MILF within the framework of the Constitution—because a peace agreed upon in good faith is preferable to a peace enforced by force of arms.

- And the fourth is to continue with the implementation of the peace agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front [MNLF]—because that is our commitment to our countrymen and to the international community.

I now invite the MILF into a brotherly embrace of peace. Let us walk away from the battlefield and into the conference room. But we must do so in good faith. You must talk peace with us, not talk while preparing for war.

And you must accept our conditions. You must drop secession, drop your criminal activities, and drop your arms.

These are not requests but demands. They are not proposals but premises. We can talk about when, where, and how, but not about whether or not. We can be flexible on timetables and methods, but not about principles.

The reasons for each demand should be obvious. I will briefly discuss them in reverse order.

You must drop your weapons because outside of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the authorized police forces, no group whatsoever has any right to maintain an armed force or military camps within the sovereign territory of this republic.

Secession by itself is a mere ideology, but if backed by armed force, it becomes a rebellion. A secessionist can only argue, but a rebel can kill. The government has no choice but to disarm the rebel—except for duly licensed personal firearms.

You must drop all your criminal activities because terrorism, bombings, and violence have no place in a civilized society. Criminals have no place in a negotiating table. Their place is in jail.

Most of all, you must drop your secessionist goals. We do not ask that you respect and recognize the sovereignty of the republic. We demand that you do.

May I give the MILF some unsolicited advice. Secession in the Philippines is an impossible dream. There simply is no space in our geography, in our demographics, and in all our national mentality for forcibly carving another state out of the present Philippine territory. For that reason, the foreign models you invoke, like East Timor, will not work for you.

Please bear in mind that you are neither the sole occupants nor even the majority in the lands you wish to carve out to convert into your own state. There are whole Filipino populations in Mindanao—Muslims, Christians, and Lumad—who do not want their territories and their residences disturbed. Not even the majority of the Muslim population shares your separatist views nor the violent means you employ to attain them. The overriding passion of the people of Mindanao is for peace.

And the international community as a whole will neither support nor sympathize with secession. In fact, we deeply appreciate the statement of the secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Conference [OIC], encouraging Muslim minorities in nonmember states, and I quote:

To contribute effectively to the progress of the countries they live in and to respect their sovereignty and laws.

Unquote.

Secession as a dream is also out of tune with history. If there is one lesson that historical evolution has taught us, it is this: That diversity is a cause for celebration, not segregation; that cultural cross-breeding leads to strength while in-breeding leads to weakness; and that cultural identities are enriched by interaction and impoverished by isolation. Some of the most glorious creations and achievements of civilization are the products of the historical confluences between Islam and Christianity.

What we should strive for is not just peaceful coexistence but interactive harmony and constructive interdependence.

We cannot negotiate over secession. The sovereignty and the integrity of the republic are not available for compromise or trade—not even for the sake of peace. Any peace won by bartering any portion of our sovereignty is an immoral peace.

We cannot talk about secession. But we can talk about a new beginning for Mindanao.

In fact, if you are bold enough for it, we can talk about a different war, a bigger war that needs to be fought. I do not mean the guerrilla warfare that you appear to have shifted to. I hope you stop—for the sake of the people, especially the poor, who will suffer the most from continued hostilities. But if you decide to engage us further, we are ready for you. If you can shift strategies and tactics, so can we.

When I talk of another war, I mean the war to correct historical wrongs, which left a sad legacy of poverty and social injustice to Mindanao. This is the war that all of us, including ex-rebels, should fight together.

Fighting the rebellion is one thing. It takes the military to do it. But fighting the root causes of rebellion is another. It will take the whole society to do it.

We can talk about the possibility of amnesty. I ask the MILF leaders to lead your followers in walking with us along the path of peace. On the other hand, I invite the MILF followers to walk with us in peace even if your leaders won't. Instead of the lives of hunted fugitives, you can now live the lives of peaceful farmers, fishermen, factory workers, merchants, entrepreneurs, or civil servants, or even soldiers or policemen. In short, we can talk about you reintegration into our society.

We can also talk about autonomy. On this subject, we are willing to be creative and to explore a wide range of possibilities, including radical changes in our political structure. I urge that we jointly envision and create a new order for Mindanao, which will restructure the governance, the economy, and the social environment of that island, with all its beauty and diversity.

We will convert Mindanao into the main food basket of the Philippines, into an agricultural paradise, and into a booming manufacturing base. Camp Abubakar, where the soldiers proudly raised the Philippine flag, will be developed into a special economic zone.

One thing I must emphasize, however, autonomy does not confer immunity or exemption from good governance, transparency, and accountability, particularly in the use of public funds.

The government has been providing full development support for Mindanao. From 1996, when the peace agreement was signed, up to 1999, the government poured in more than P32 billion for socioeconomic development programs into the special zone of peace and development [SZOPAD] comprising 14 provinces, as well as for the support and strengthening of the political institutions in the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao [ARMM].

But to move both the peace process and the development of Mindanao forward faster, I urge Congress to pass the bill amending the ARMM Organic Act and the bill granting special powers to enable the fast-track of development of Mindanao.

On the matter of the Abu Sayyaf, we are all happy that some hostages have been released. I wish to give assurance that the primary concern of the government is the safe release of the hostages.

Contrary to rebel propaganda, our fight is not against Muslims at all. They are all our brothers. Our fight is against rebels and other outlaws, regardless of their religion.

Thus, I wish to send a message to all Muslim Filipinos, the majority of whom share a passion for peace and renounce the separatist rebellion.

My Muslim brothers: We worship the same God—the God of Abraham and Moses. You call him by his Arabic name, *Allah*, which in Filipino simply means *Ang Diyos* and in English, *God*. Is He on your side or ours? Maybe neither. He is on the side of peace, and therefore on both our sides. The government invoked the Constitution when it rolled back the rebellion. Let us now invoke our common God as we build the structures of peace.

As we embark on a new beginning in Mindanao, we shall also launch a new beginning for integrity in government.

In my address to you last year, I said: “Hindi binebeybi and rebelyon. Pinipisa. Iyan ay aking tinupad.”

More recently, I also said: “I offer peace to those who want peace. But I promise defeat to those who want war. Iyan ay tinupad ko rin.” [*Applause*]

I remind you of these statements because from the rebellion, I am shifting the war towards another enemy: graft and corruption.

Ito ang pangako ko sa inyo: Ito ay tutuparin ko rin. [*Applause*]

Ang aking susunod na digmaan ay laban sa mga tiwali sa pamahalaan at sa mga tao ng pribadong sektor na nakikipagsabwatan sa kanila.

Graft and corruption weakens the the moral fabric of our people, robs the poor, increases the costs of doing business, erodes tax collection efforts, and drives away investments. The World Bank estimates that at least 20 percent of government project funds ends up as kickbacks.

The World Bank, at my personal request, has conducted extensive studies which they assembled into a report entitled “Combating Corruption in the Philippines.” It presents an exhaustive analysis of corruption in this country, and puts forward a set of recommendations.

We can no longer fight corruption piecemeal. We need a comprehensive approach that would reduce opportunities for corruption; remove needless regulations and simplify procedures; eradicate the need to recover electoral expenses by corrupt means; increase public vigilance both to deter and to detect commissions of graft; reform budget processes; improve meritocracy in the civil service; target selected departments and agencies for cleansing; increase the efficiency and speed in catching offenders and their prosecution; stiffen sanctions against corruption partnerships with the private sector; and support judicial reform to make the courts part of the solution rather than part of the problem. The courts should not allow themselves to be used as a refuge for scoundrels.

I warn all departments and agencies of government to brace themselves, especially those consistently listed in surveys and studies on government corruption.

I will be submitting to Congress an urgent bill creating an anti-graft and corruption commission. This bill will provide the government with the necessary powers and resources to combat this long-festering cancer in our society. I also urge Congress to pass the anti-racketeering bill with anti-money laundering provisions.

Pigilin, supilin, sugpuin ang graft and corruption! [*Applause*]

As the war on graft intensifies, the war on poverty continues. Our premise is that the most effective way of eradicating poverty is through sound, noninflationary growth and development. This, however, must be complemented by focused interventions that aim directly at poverty reduction. Hence, the high priority accorded by my government to agriculture and the rural areas, education, health, housing, agrarian reform.

Agriculture, after a momentary dip in the first quarter from the 6 percent growth in 1999, resumed its robust performance with a 4.8 percent growth in the second quarter of this year.

In education, last year we constructed thousands of new classrooms, provided hundreds of thousands of new desks, addressed the teacher shortage problem, and proposed improvements to the curricula to meet both global standards and local needs. In partnership with the private sector, we have extended assistance to students by providing them access to the Internet.

In health, we launched a parallel importation program to bring down the market prices of medicines drastically and make them affordable to the poor.

For the 10-month period from July 1999 to May 2000, more than 190,000 households were provided with housing units. This represents 52 percent of the target households to be sheltered in Metro Manila and surrounding provinces.

In agrarian reform, our government has distributed a total of 523,000 hectares of land to 305,000 farmers.

We continued to lay the groundwork for future growth with continuing advances in the construction and completion of major roads and water supply basins, in the energizing of our barangays, 77.4 percent of which now have power, and in the exploitation of natural gas fields to reduce our dependence on imported oil.

We have been implementing the Clean Air Act, among others, by phasing out leaded gasoline in Metro Manila ahead of schedule. We have been removing massive debris from the Pasig River, including sunken vessels, and we continue rehabilitation works on Laguna Lake and its tributaries.

We terminated the customs valuation and surveillance contract with the SGS. We not only saved P4.2 billion a year in fees; we also exceeded our customs collection target by P3.7 billion without their help.

We pushed the passage of the e-Commerce Act, for which I thank Congress. This makes the Philippines only the fourth Asian country to have such a law. We are among the very few countries whose legal systems now recognize that trade and financial transactions are shifting away from the physical and the paper-based world to the rapid electronic highways of the Internet.

In our external relations, we agreed with the other ASEAN leaders to advance the full establishment of the ASEAN Free Trade Area. We continued to play an active role in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group [APEC], the Asia-Europe Meetings [ASEM], and the United Nations and its various agencies. To strengthen our bilateral partnerships, I visited China, Japan, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, and Argentina the past year. Tonight, I will be leaving for my official visit to the United States.

Since I last addressed you, our economy as a whole has experienced moderate growth, low inflation, low interest rates, strong exports, a healthy balance of payments, and record-high international reserves.

In 1999, our GDP grew by 3.4 percent while GNP rose by 3.7 percent. In the first quarter of the current year 2000, GDP rose by 3.4 percent and GNP by 3.45 percent. Not spectacular, but at least I would say respectable. The industry sector reversed its 3.6 percent decline in the first quarter of last year with a 4.8 percent rise in the first quarter this year.

Our inflation rate was 6.6 percent in 1999, and a highly commendable 3.5 percent for the first semester of this year.

Interest rates remained low. The 91-day Treasury bill rates stayed below 9 percent since the last week of June 1999. Correspondingly, commercial bank lending rates also remained soft.

Because of the rise in private consumption expenditures, the government pulled back from the pump-priming activities it had engaged in to counteract the recessionary effects of the Asian crisis. The deficit for the first five months of the current year was P34.1 billion, or P11.2 billion less than last year.

Exports, led by electronics and semiconductors, reached an impressive \$11.3 billion in the first four months this year, 10.6 percent higher than for the same period last year.

We posted a balance of trade surplus of \$732 million in the first quarter and \$4.31 billion for the whole of 1999, reversing by multiples the \$163 million deficit in 1998.

As a result of this, plus the remittances of our overseas Filipino workers, our gross international reserves reached an all-time high of \$15.44 billion in May 2000, and are expected to rise to \$17.1 billion by the end of the year.

The recent weaknesses in the foreign exchange rate of the peso cannot therefore be attributed to our macroeconomic fundamentals. Our fundamentals are by any standards respectable—except to those who refuse to see. In fact, barely two weeks ago, we reentered the Japanese Samurai Bond Market with a successful 5-year bond float of around \$330 million.

The depreciation of the peso is the result largely of a new Asian crisis contagion: Other currencies in the region have been weakening due to political factors and the strength of the US economy and the US dollar. If the peso had not adjusted accordingly, our exports would have become less competitive. Obviously, the nervousness about the potential implications of the Mindanao conflict on the economy also contributed to the depreciation of the peso.

We were thus witness to a paradox: strong exports, large external trade and payment surpluses, and record levels of international reserves side by side with a depreciating peso.

That paradox, in fact, might be a harbinger of some dark clouds coming back. After a brief period of recovery from the financial crisis, the Asian region is suffering from a mild relapse. As mentioned, currency exchange rates are depreciating. Oil prices have gone up substantially. Unemployment is rising. And investments are nervously staying away from the East Asian region as a whole.

As we take a long, hard look at the future, what we see is the need for long, hard work ahead.

Under threat of a national and regional slowdown, we must keep working at the basics which, because they had been forgotten, led to the Asian crisis in the first place. We must keep up the pace of reforms, particularly by improving governance all around.

I must confess, however, that I find the faddish word *reform* as too weak and wimpish. What I believe the Philippine economy needs is not just reforms but radical restructuring.

Many are asking why is it that other Asian countries, which went through a worse crisis than we did, actually grew faster on the rebound. One reason is that we recovered from a higher base, they from a lower one. A more fundamental reason is that the very structure of the Philippine economy today was inherited from past decades of import substitution and protective policies, aggravated by economic mismanagement and corruption. Our industrial base is thin. Due to decades of neglect, our agricultural productivity is low. Our population growth rate is high. And our technology is on a catch-up mode. Rectifying these decades of historical errors and lapses will take much more than two years of any presidency.

Radical restructuring entails the modernization of the economy, both physically and electronically, to make it more productive, efficient, and globally competitive. And modernization must touch not just agriculture and industry but the brains and hands of our people, to put the country squarely on the path of the information superhighway, which in turn links the world's knowledge-based economies into one vast global network.

Physically, the sunset industries we have inherited from the past must yield to the sunrise industries of the Internet age. Agriculture must go through a total technological conversion, and our education must catch up with the 21st century.

In the meantime, we must lay the basic foundations, the infrastructure, for enabling these *modernizations* to happen.

In fact, infrastructure is our response both to our long-term and our short-term needs. The expected slowdown in private consumption and investments must be counteracted by a new wave of pump-priming.

There are about \$10.3 billion of official development assistance [ODA] available. One billion dollars of this can be readily used for the rehabilitation and development of Mindanao. We will attack the institutional defects and bureaucratic bottlenecks that have prevented the government in the past from utilizing the ODAs. It's a shame that because of the bottlenecks, the disbursements on ODA-funded projects fell to \$800 million last year.

There are also development funds abroad that can be made available provided they are used for major road projects here in Luzon. These we will seek to utilize.

I ask Congress to pass two vital bills: the *Government Projects Expeditious Implementation Act*, which limits to the Supreme Court alone the power to issue temporary restraining orders [TROs] against government projects, and the *Act Providing for Measures to Facilitate the Acquisition of Right-of-Way for Government Infrastructure Projects*. In addition, I ask you to approve my proposal in the 2001 budget to double the appropriations for foreign-assisted projects.

All these institutional reforms and radical restructurings, plus additional measures I will mention later, should restore and increase the country's ability to compete for investments in the future.

As we build our infrastructure, so shall we build our information superhighway. In fact, instead of just retracing the history of other faster-growing countries, we have decided to leapfrog from the so-called old economy to the new economy using information technology, including e-commerce, to fast-track our productivity and our competitiveness.

In the 1,408 remaining days of my presidency, there is more to come. Let me share with you a few highlights of my vision for the future, which consists both of continuities from the past and of quantum leaps into new beginnings.

The economy will grow by an average of 5 percent during my term. My critics say that this target is not ambitious and lower than that of our Asian neighbors. I should remind them that this growth rate is much higher than what we achieved in the past. And if I can, for the first time, defeat the boom-bust cycle, my successor will have a good shot at achieving tiger economy growth rates. (I could see the vice president's face smiling.) [*Applause*]

We will concentrate on providing both socialized and affordable housing for the poor and the wage earners. Housing is a basic human need and generates employment, which is a recession antidote.

We must by all means prevent another Payatas by encouraging the reduction, segregation, recycling, and composting of garbage, and by using alternative state-of-the-art technologies.

We will continue with our program of deregulation and liberalization. We will push through with the privatization of a number of our government corporations that have been identified and prioritized.

We will convert the power sector into a competitive, market-driven industry. This aim is to ensure a higher and more reliable power supply at lower cost to commercial and residential users. Now, may I urge Congress to pass the Power Bill as a matter of high priority.

We will push through further with reforms that strengthen our institutions. In line with this, I ask Congress to pass the new Central Bank Act, which will empower the government to add to the durability and responsiveness of what already is one of the soundest banking systems in all of Asia.

The Philippines will rapidly evolve into a center for software programming and a base for hosting and providing Internet services. As we now excel in the export of electronic products and semiconductors, we are also fast becoming a major link in the limitless world of the Internet. The big players have begun to converge here, in addition to Texas Instruments in Baguio and Acer in Subic, Clark now hosts the America Online [AOL] call center. Scheduled for signing during my trip to the US are memoranda of agreement with Oracle Inc. and with Pacific Technology International, among others.

The Philippines, in other words, is fast moving from the world of “brick and mortar” to the world of “clicks and portals.”

By linking up our schools to the world of the Internet and the cyber world, the Philippines educational system will take a giant stride in coverage and quality. Our future “e-schools” will be able to reach more students and provide relevant instruction.

The Philippine National Police will continue to pursue its policy of absolute zero tolerance against illegal drugs. It will also continue to professionalize itself in its no-nonsense fight against crime and lawlessness.

We will modernize the fighting capabilities of the entire Armed Forces of the Philippines, both in terms of personnel and equipment. Their outstanding performance in Mindanao further highlighted their importance in preserving the territorial integrity of the republic from external and internal threats.

In fact, we will streamline the entire government, enhance the quality of government service, and increase the efficiency by which basic services are delivered. In this connection, I call on Congress to pass the bill re-engineering the bureaucracy.

By way of electoral reform, 45 percent of all the 190,000 precincts all over the country will be computerized by the year 2001, and 100 percent by the elections of 2004. This program will speed up the counting of votes and eliminate opportunities for fraud. I will never tolerate election fraud since I was once cheated when I first ran for mayor of San Juan. And I know how it feels to be cheated. Fortunately, the Supreme Court declared me the winner.

Admittedly, over the past two years, the presidency itself has struggled through the challenges of coping with the learning curve made more difficult by the long-lasting effects on the corporate sector of the Asian financial crisis and by the vicious attempts of my detractors to discredit me and my family. These attacks started way back during my campaign and never let up. Unfortunately, by discrediting me, the head of state and of government, they also undermine the confidence of the international community in the country, and thereby damage the prospects for our economy.

Sa halip na tayo ay magsiraan, kailangang magkaisa at magtulungan tayo sa darating na apat na taon upang mapabilis ang ating pag-unlad. Habang tayo ay nagsisiraan at nagaaway-away, nagpapalakpakan naman ang ating karatig-bansa dahil sa kanila pumupunta ang mga dayuhang kapitalista at mga turista.

Nonetheless, the presidency has learned its lessons well. At this point, the presidency itself is poised for its own new beginnings. *[Applause]*

To assure crystal-clear transparency in all government transactions and to remove all opportunities for abuse by all government officials, I wish to make the following announcements.

As long as I am President, there will be no negotiated contracts in all government procurements, public works, and other construction projects. We will never allow another Amari or Centennial Expo to happen ever again. [Applause] All supply and construction contracts will be awarded through public bidding.

And to make doubly sure that future bids will be completely transparent, the government will resort to electronic public biddings, or the so-called *reverse auction* method, where bids from all suppliers and contractors will be posted on a website. This brings transparency to a new dimension.

As long as I am President, there will be no government guarantees issued on the loans of private firms. No creditors should be shielded by the government's sovereign guarantees from the market risks that they themselves should bear. The risks should not be borne by the taxpayers.

The only guarantees to be given will be under the most restrictive conditions, such as those provided by the BOT law.

I shall not do to the next administration what the last one did to mine, [applause] namely, hand over multibillion-peso guarantees on failed negotiated projects that my administration now has to honor and pay.

No government financial institution shall extend any new loans, nor shall any government agency enter into any new contracts, with those with bad records and unresolved disputes with government.

We will further curb smuggling by rationalizing the operation of duty-free shops. We will confine them to traditional merchandise, like alcoholic beverages and cigarettes carried in plastic bags, not frozen chickens and cheese curls loaded on grocery shopping carts; where consumers can purchase chocolate bars, but not the refrigerators to store them in. Duty free-shops should not operate as supermarkets, and vice versa. [Applause]

I have ordered all the agencies concerned to carry out the investigation and, if warranted, the prosecution of those suspected of illegal involvement in the trading of shares of BW Resources. [Applause] Incidentally, I wish to thank the honorable members of Congress for passing the new Securities Regulation Act, which provides for stronger protection of investors from fraud and which strengthens the capabilities of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

I hereby order the concerned agencies to resolve the air dispute with Taiwan at the shortest time possible, taking into account the interests of our OFWs, balikbayans, and tourists, as well as cargo shippers. [Applause] We will reshape our aviation policies to promote primarily the interests of the economy.

Before I conclude, I wish to extend my administration's gratitude and appreciation to the honorable members of Congress for acting on a significant number of measures. You have enacted a large number of important laws affecting the economy, including the Electronic Commerce Law, the Safeguard Measures Act, the Securities Regulation Code, and the Retail Trade Liberalization Law, among others. Congress worked long and hard to deliver these measures. Alam ko pong inuumaga kayo sa inyong mga sesyon at ako po naman ay taus-pusong nagpapasalamat sa inyong lahat. [Applause]

Ngunit hindi pa tayo tapos. [Laughter] May utang pa tayo sa bayan. Umaasa ako na inyong pagtitibayin ang mga panukalang batas tulad ng amendments to the ARMM Organic Act, the Power Bill, the new Central Bank Act, the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Act, the Reengineering the Bureaucracy Act, the Anti-Racketeering Act, amendments to the Omnibus Investment Code, and the bill granting special powers for the fast-track development of Mindanao. [Applause]

Ayan, ihinuli ko na yung special power. Hindi emergency power, special power lamang. Pero nasa inyo na 'yon.

To conclude, with all due candor:

We have done quite well, but we could have done better. We have gone quite far, but we are far from where we want to go. And before we can tell a story of success, we will have to go through a story of struggle. The weather ahead will be a bit rough before we get to see some real sunshine.

In the face of the difficulties we confront, I call on the whole country to work together in unison rather than to fall apart in dissension. We can ride the storm if we unite. It will blow us apart if we fight.

I also call on the affluent to pay their taxes correctly. *[Applause]* There is only one thing worse than not spending enough on pro-poor programs, and that is running excessive deficits and allowing inflation and macroeconomic instability to rob the poor.

The present uncertainties call for courage, and hope, and faith in our ability to cope and prevail. If we face these challenges with the proper spirit, we will survive the storm and thrive when the sunshine returns.

Now that I have brought my presidency through a process of renewal, I ask you once again to give me your trust and your support. Let us leave the past with all its disappointments behind, and let us shape our future together. Let us all embark on a new beginning.

As I said earlier, there are only 1,400 days left of my presidency. Ang tunay nating kalaban ay ang kahirapan. At inaamin ko na kahit na ako ang pangulo, hindi ko kayang labanan ito nang nag-iisa. Kaya kailangan ko ang tulong ninyong lahat. *[Applause]* Magkaisa na po tayo alang-alang sa ating bayan at sa ating mga anak na dapat na bigyan natin ng isang mapayapa, maunlad, at magandang kinabukasan.

Maraming salamat po. *[Applause]* *[Standing ovation]*

PRESS STATEMENTS

Statement: President Estrada on his departure for the Sixth ASEAN Summit, the State Visit to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and the Working Visit to the Kingdom of Thailand

Departure Statement of President Joseph Ejercito Estrada:

For the Sixth ASEAN Summit, the State Visit to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and the Working Visit to the Kingdom of Thailand

[Issued at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, December 14, 1998]

THE PHILIPPINES AND ASEAN: FORGING AHEAD

Your Excellencies of the diplomatic corps, colleagues in government, my dear countrymen:

I depart today for my third foreign travel since assuming the presidency. For this trip, I will pursue three missions.

First mission is to represent the country at the Summit of the Heads of State of the nine ASEAN member countries.

ASEAN holds a formal summit every three years, and this one in Hanoi will only be the sixth in the organization's 31 years of existence. This year's meeting affords me the opportunity to exchange views with other ASEAN leaders on regional and international political and economic developments. We shall discuss measures for early economic recovery and the sustainable and equitable development of our economies in the face of the current financial and economic crisis in Asia. We will also have to consider strategies to advance ASEAN solidarity and cohesion in the midst of potential regional problems.

As this will be its last formal summit in this century, ASEAN will examine the past and draw a blueprint for the future. We expect to adopt at the Summit the Hanoi Declaration and Plan of Action, which will provide directions for the attainment of our regional goals contained in the ASEAN Vision 2020 Statement issued in Kuala Lumpur last year.

On the second day of the ASEAN Summit, ASEAN leaders will have a joint meeting with the leaders of the three biggest countries of East Asia: China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. We will jointly consider cooperation for regional economic recovery and for maintaining and promoting regional peace, security and stability in the twenty-first century.

Thereafter, the nine ASEAN leaders will meet separately with the Heads of State of these three big economies of East Asia. These meetings will allow us to review the implementation of important decisions and proposals made at the first of such meetings held in Kuala Lumpur last year.

Upon the invitation of President Tran Duc Long, I will visit Vietnam on December 17 and 18. This is my second mission.

Although diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Vietnam were established only 22 years ago, our ties and cooperation with that country are deep and intensifying at a commendable pace and over a widening scope.

Filipino professionals and technicians are occupying important positions in companies in Vietnam firms and contributing to the economic development of that country. The investments of Filipino companies have amounted to almost \$300 million, making us one of the biggest ASEAN investors there. We see more possibilities for trade and economic expansion with that country.

On the last leg of this travel, I will be honoring the kind invitation of the Prime Minister of Thailand, His Excellency Chuan Leek Pai, to pay a visit to his country. From Hanoi, I will be flying to Bangkok on December 18 for a three-day working visit. Short as the visit may be, it is not wanting in importance.

Thailand was the first ASEAN country to establish diplomatic relations with the Philippines in 1949. Next year, we will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of that momentous event. Thailand has been a close neighbor and a solid political, security and economic partner of the Philippines. In 1961, our two countries planted the seed of ASA-the Association of Southeast Asia — and nurtured it to blossom as the ASEAN we know today.

Aside from having official talks with my counterparts in Hanoi and Bangkok, I will meet with other high-ranking leaders. I will also have ample occasions to address business groups, conduct interviews with the media, and interact with the Filipino communities in the two capitals. Significantly, I will witness the signing of agreements between the Philippines, and the countries of Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore.

Mga minamahal kong kababayan, batay sa aking mga nabanggit ay makikita ninyo ang kahalagahan ng aking gagawing paglalakbay. Hangad nating lalo pang tumibay ang ating ugnayan sa ating mga kapit-bansa sa Asya. Ito rin ay isang paglalakbay upang balikan ang nakaraan at pagyamanin ang landas sa kinabukasan ng ating rehiyon.

Umaasa akong tulad sa aking mga naunang paglalakbay, kasama ko ang minimithing tagumpay para sa sambayanang Pilipino.

Mabuhay tayong lahat!

*Source: **University of the Philippines Main Library***

OFFICIAL GAZETTE OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

**ATIONAL GOVERNMENT PORTAL – EDITED AT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE
PHILIPPINES UNDER COMMONWEALTH ACT NO. 638**

Statement: President Estrada on the Jose Velarde Account, January 16, 2001

**Statement of President Joseph Ejercito Estrada:
On the Jose Velarde Account**

First of all, I thank the Good Lord for giving us this initial favorable vote—which is the first major vote in the many more major votes to be cast in the impeachment trial.

This trial has been a very difficult and trying experience for us and for the entire Filipino nation. Just like in any important trial, as shown in the past weeks—you win some you lose some. But I am praying that in the end, our lawyers will be able to get justice for us.

Since the beginning of the trial, I have been praying that in the end, whatever is the outcome, our constitutional system and democratic institutions will remain stronger and more vibrant than ever.

I appeal to our countrymen to keep calm and pray for strength and guidance. Let us pray that we may be spared of further violence, injuries or deaths that have plagued our country in recent times.

Mga minamahal kong mga kababayan, tayo ay magpakahinahon at magdasal ng lakas at patnubay upang huwag magkaroon ng anumang karahasan at iba pang pangyayari na hindi ikabubuti at ipagkakaisa ng ating bayan. I wish to assure the public that the Jose Velarde Account is not mine.

Source: University of the Philippines Main Library

HISTORICAL PAPERS AND DOCUMENTS

Remarks of President Estrada at the Send-Off Ceremonies for the Philippine Delegation to the 13th Asian Games in Thailand, December 2, 1998

**Remarks
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
At the Send-off Ceremonies for the Philippine Delegation
to the 13th Asian Games in Thailand**

[Delivered at the Heroes Hall, Malacañang, December 2, 1998]

PROVING OUR WILL TO WIN

Ako ay natutuwa na kayo ay makapiling ko ngayon bago kayo lumaban sa Asian Games. Ito ay isang karangalan para sa akin na mabasbasan kayo bago kayo umalis patungong Bangkok.

As they say “many are called but few are chosen.” Thousands out there would love to be in your shoes and give their best for our people and country. But only few of the many athletes who aspired to don the Philippine colors for the 13th Bangkok Asian Games were selected to represent the country in this sporting event.

As you embark on your ultimate challenge, rest assured that millions of your countrymen will be at your back — cheering and praying for your success. Millions more will be watching you — glued to their television sets from December 6 to 20 to witness the unfolding of the events and the spectacular performances of the men and women who are here right now.

As athletic ambassadors of the country — your fellowmen look up to you as symbols of pride and role models for our younger Filipinos to follow.

Let this be your strength and morale booster as you exchange wits and muscles with your Asian counterparts. Let this inspire you more as you gallantly fight your battle for sports excellence and let this hope be your shining glory — for our people and country.

I have no doubt that you will perform well. I have always believed in the skill and in the fighting spirit of the Filipinos, especially our athletes. The promotion of Philippine sports, specifically mass sports, jibes well with my administration’s pro-people agenda. Thus, I consider sports as a matter of national priority.

Sports is a great equalizer. Dito walang palakasan, walang padrino, walang kamag-anak. Everybody — regardless of age, gender and social status — has to play according to rules.

Sports teaches us discipline, hard work, humility and teamwork — values that will enable us, as a nation, to hurdle the challenges obstructing our march towards national development.

It is for this reason that we should give more attention to our younger athletes. *Iba ‘yung bata pa, sinasanay na.*

A good example is 13-year old gymnast Pia Adelle Reyes — who is with us today — who won three gold medals in the last Southeast Asian Games in Jakarta, Indonesia. Since she is still very young, one can already imagine how many more medals she will be winning in the years ahead.

This is the main reason why I intend to establish a sporting foundation for our potential and future champions. Thus, today, we are launching the Batang Pinoy Program of my administration. This program is for boys and girls 12 years old and under.

I urge all government agencies concerned, as well as all local government units from the provinces down to the barangays, to fully support this program.

To succeed we must have teamwork, not only in sports, but in other national undertakings geared towards the betterment of our lives.

Our experiences in past international competitions tell us that we can do a lot better and now is the time to do it, when we are vigorously striving for excellence in every field. On your prowess and will to win rest our hopes for greater triumphs at the Asian Games.

On this day as you set forth, my prayers, those of the First Lady and the entire nation go with you. Remember that the brave and stout-hearted can summon all the tenacity, endurance and strength to become the best in the world.

Sa inyong pag-alis patungong Bangkok, inyong tandaan — tayo'y Pilipino, taas noo kahit kanino ... Ipaglaban ninyo ang Pilipinas.

Maraming salamat at hangad naming lahat ang inyong tagumpay.

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

Remarks of President Estrada signing of the three Loan Agreements between the Republic of the Philippines and World Bank, December 11, 1998

**Remarks
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
On the signing of the three Loan Agreements between the Republic of the Philippines and World Bank**

[Delivered at the Main Conference Room, Malacañang, December 11, 1998]

A STEP TOWARDS ECONOMIC RECOVERY

First of all, let me convey my gratitude to the World Bank for all the support it has been extending to our country.

Today's signing of the Agreements for the Banking System Reform Loan, the Private Enterprise Credit Support Project of the Development Bank of the Philippines, and the third Rural Finance Project of the Land Bank of the Philippines signifies your earnest intention to continue helping our government. With them, we can continue carrying out our development thrusts and reforms which focus on the banking sector, industrial and infrastructure sectors, and in the rural sector.

The recent financial crisis in Asia has made us in the Philippines even more determined to strengthen our financial system. We are vigorously enhancing our fiscal sustainability, increasing our domestic savings and deepening our capital markets.

Recent economic developments have given us confidence that we are recovering fast from this crisis. This confidence is affirmed by no less than the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Aside from helping us enhance our capacity to respond to crises in the future, these measures will help us become financially stable. Your support is a clear indication of your confidence in the economic directions that our government has taken.

We welcome the efforts made by the World Bank to extend loan financing in support of strengthening the prudential and supervision systems in the banking sector, in providing wholesale credit facilities to small and medium enterprises, and in enhancing economic activities in the countryside.

Our collaboration in undertaking these activities is a signal to the world of our joint resolve to address the root causes of the Asian financial crisis and thereby inspire confidence that this will come to an end soon.

I firmly believe that economic progress cannot be sustained unless we address the problem of poverty. While my Administration is vigorously pursuing the policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization, I will, however, devote more attention and resources to programs and projects that will directly improve the living condition of the masses. I believe that your assistance will greatly help in the end to attain my objectives as President.

These agreements, therefore, signify the concrete support of the World Bank to our agenda of governance and we eagerly await their early implementation.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay tayong lahat.

Source: University of the Philippines Diliman Library

Remarks of President Estrada during the Healing Mass for the Nation, October 27, 2000

**Remarks
of
His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada
President of the Philippines
During the Healing Mass for the Nation**

[Delivered at the Heroes Hall, Malacañang, October 27, 2000]

**SEEKING DIVINE INTERVENTION
FOR UNITY AND SURVIVAL**

Marami pong salamat sa inyong pagdalo dito sa natatanging misa ng pag-aalay ng pasasalamat sa ating mahal na Panginoon sa Kanyang mapagmahal na pagpapat-nubay sa atin sa harap ng mga suliraning kinakaharap ng ating bansa at mga mamamayan.

Napakaraming suliranin ang bumaba-gabag sa atin at sa ating bansa nitong mga nakaraang araw – subalit alam ko at alam ninyong lahat – na ang mga ito ay mga matitinding pagsubok lamang sa katatagan ng ating pananam-palataya sa Kanya.

Napakarami na ang naging pagsubok na dumating sa ating pambansang pamumuhay, at lahat ng mga ito ay ating nalampasan ng buong husay. Basta't tayo ay lagging nananalig at nananalangin sa kanya, walang balakid na hindi natin malalampasan.

I believe that our country will be a much better and more progressive country if like Christ in the Eucharist, we will live as persons who give our lives to God in the service of our fellowmen. Our heroes showed us that the way to liberation – from hunger and fear – is through the way of sacrifice.

Kaya naman kung ang pagharap ko at ng aking pamilya sa mga walang batayang akusasyon ay isang paraan ng pagsa-sakripisyo upang maliwanagan ang sambayanan, tinatanggap ko po ito at haharapin. Ang nakalu-lungkot lamang ay ang buong sambayanan ang nagdurusa. Subalit ang Panginoon ay laging naririyang at ang kailangan lamang ay taimtim tayong dumulog sa Kanya at hilingin ang Kanyang kapatawaran at pagkandili.

Please remember what God said in the Second Book of Chronicles, chapter 7 verse 14: *“If my people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”*

And what God’s promise to Solomon? He said: *I have heard your prayer, and I have chosen this place for My house of sacrifice. If I close heaven so that there is no rain, if I command the locust to devour the land, if I send pestilence among my people, and if my people, upon whom My name has been pronounced, humble themselves and pray, and seek My presence and turn from their evil ways, I will hear them from the heaven and pardon their sins and revive their land.”*

Kaya naman ang hiling ko lamang ay pag-ibayuhin pa natin ang ating panalangin na patuloy tayong gabayan ng Kanyang kadakilaan, at sana ay ituro Niya sa atin ang tamang landas tungo sa pagkaka-unawaan, kapayapaan at kaginhawaan.

At bilang pagpapamalas ng ating lubos na pananam-palataya sa Kanya, itigil natin ang inggitan, imbutan at siraan nang sa gayon ay bigyan ang buong sambayanan ng Kanyang lubos na pagpapala.

Maraming salamat po at patnubayan tayo ng Maykapal.

Source: **University of the Philippines Diliman Library**

